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VILLAGE SERMONS;

OR, SHORT AND PLAIN

DISCOURSES,

FOR THE USE OF

FAMILIES, SCHOOLS, AND RELIGIOUS SOCIETIES

BY GEORGE BURDER.

67959 ae.

VOL. II.

CONTAINING THIRTEEN SERMONS.

A NEW EDITION.

A 62

Come, let us go forth into the Field; let us lodge in the Villages.—SOL. SONG.

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SERMON XIV.

MATT. vi. 9, 10, 11, 12, AND 13th VERSES.

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father, which art in heaven: Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

PRAYER to God is the bounden duty of all men. "We live, and move, and have our being in him."—"Every good and perfect gift proceeds from him."—"Men ought, therefore, always to pray, and not to faint." We are so sinful that we always need mercy. We are so weak that we always need help. We are so empty that we always need supplies. We are so exposed that we always need protection. How reasonable, then, is it, that we should continue in prayer!

But we greatly need direction in prayer. We know not how to pray, nor what to pray for, as we ought. Therefore Christ has been pleased to teach us in these words, which contain an excellent pattern for prayer. Not that we are tied down to use these very words, much less to use them always; but *after this manner* we are to pray. Now, as many persons constantly use this prayer, it may be very useful to explain it; because it may be feared that a great many say the words without knowing their

meaning, which is formality at best; and many contradict every part of this prayer by their wicked lives, which is base hypocrisy. May we, therefore, be assisted by the good Spirit rightly to understand it, that so, whenever we use it hereafter, we may offer up a reasonable and spiritual sacrifice, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

I. *Our Father, which art in heaven.* We should always begin our prayers with proper thoughts of God. And what thoughts of him are so proper as those suggested by these words; namely, his *goodness* and his *greatness?* As a *Father*, he is good. As a *heavenly* Father, he is great. Thus are we taught to approach him both with confidence and with reverence.

As the Creator of all men, God may, in a general sense, be called the Father of all: but it is in a higher and sweeter sense that he is here called a Father. We are to take it in a gospel view—God reconciled to believing sinners through faith in the blood of Jesus Christ. God is angry with the wicked every day. He does not look down upon them with a father's eye, nor do they look up to him with a child-like spirit. Therefore this prayer is not fit for the use of a man who lives in sin; whose carnal mind is enmity against God. How dare the swearer, the liar, the drunkard, call God a Father? God will not own the relation. If such men pray, might they not rather cry—Our father which art in *hell?* for Christ said to such persons, "Ye are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." John viii. 44.

But when a person is convinced of his lost estate by sin; when he is enlightened to know Christ as a Saviour; and when, by precious faith, he comes to God through him; then God is reconciled to him; his anger is turned away, and he comforts him.

Then he may look up to God, as a merciful God, "forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin;" for, "to as many as receive Christ," and the atonement through him, "he giveth power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name;" and to such only is "the Spirit of adoption" given, whereby they cry, "Abba, Father." For it is one thing to use the word *father*, and another to approach him as a loving child comes to a tender parent, with a persuasion of his being able and willing to supply his wants. To such persons this name is full of comfort: for they are emboldened to believe, that if earthly parents, though evil, know how to give good gifts to their children, God, our heavenly Father, is much more disposed to do them good, and bless them with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus.

But this name teacheth us also the *greatness* of God. Children ought to treat their earthly parents with great respect; but what reverence is due to the Father of spirits, whose throne is in the heavens! yea, "the heaven of heavens cannot contain him." God is every where present; he is not confined to heaven; but he is said to dwell there, because there he displays the brightest beams of his glorious majesty; and there angels and saints bow low before his feet, crying day and night, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty!" Such thoughts as these should possess our minds when we say, *Our Father which art in heaven.* Think of his goodness and his greatness when you pray. Take care to lift up your hearts to heaven, when you pray to him who dwells in heaven, or else your prayers will never reach his throne.

II. *Hallowed be thy name!* This is the first petition; and is placed first to show us that our first and chief desire should be *that God may be glorified;* for that is the meaning of it. The name of God

signifies God himself, as he is pleased to make himself known to us by his names and titles, his words and works; for as a man is known to us by his name, so God has made himself known to us in the gospel. There all his glorious perfections shine and unite. There he shows himself "a just God and a Saviour." Now, to *hallow* God's name is to *sanctify* it; to hold it sacred: for to sanctify any thing is to set it apart from every profane and common use. In this petition, then, we pray that God would enable us to glorify him in all things whereby he makes himself known. We must glorify him in our *hearts*, by high, holy, reverent thoughts of him. We must glorify him by our *tongues*, by always speaking of him in the most serious manner. We must glorify him in all our actions; not only by acts of solemn worship, but by the most common actions of life; for, whether we eat or drink, all should be done with a view to the glory of God.

Now, how dreadfully far from this are many who say this prayer, and who no sooner rise from their knees than they profane and blaspheme this holy name. Think of this, you who curse and swear, or take the Lord's name in vain! When you say in a thoughtless manner, God bless us! O God! O Christ! &c. is this to *hallow* the name of God? Leave off praying, or leave off swearing; for they cannot agree together.

But let every one that fears God remember, that the glory of God is the first and chief thing that we are to ask for, and to desire, and seek, even before our own good. Now, that we and others may do this, we are taught, in the next place, to pray,

III. *Thy kingdom come!* Now this does not mean the kingdom of God's providence, which rules over all; this cannot be said to *come*, for it is come already, and will never cease; but it means that *spiri-*

tual kingdom which Christ came to set up in the world. That kingdom of the Messiah, which the pious Jews had long expected, and which, when this prayer was given to the disciples, was said to be *at hand.* This kingdom of Christ did come soon after. It was set up when Christ ascended to heaven, and the Spirit descended from it. But still the prayer is as necessary as ever: for we pray that this kingdom may be established in our hearts, and extended to all the world.

The kingdom of Christ is erected on purpose to destroy the kingdom of Satan. The devil has usurped a dominion over all mankind; and though he does not now possess the bodies of men, as once he did, yet he "ruleth in the hearts of the children of disobedience," who are "led captive by him at his will:" and in some parts of the world he is actually worshipped as God. Now, in order to destroy this infernal kingdom, Jesus Christ came into the world; he overcame Satan in all his attempts to seduce him; and on the cross he spoiled principalities and powers, and conquered when he fell; he deprived Satan of his power, and led captivity captive. Wherever he sends his gospel, he proclaims liberty; and wherever he gives his grace to any person, there Satan is dethroned; and being made willing to submit to Christ; the believer is translated out of Satan's kingdom of sin and darkness, into the holy and happy kingdom of God's dear Son.

Now when we say, *thy kingdom come,* we pray that the light, power, liberty, and glory of Christ's spiritual kingdom may be more fully experienced in our own hearts, more fully established in our own souls. For, as one observes—"In *worship* we pay our homage to God. In the *word,* we come to learn his laws. In the *sacrament,* we renew our oaths of allegiance. In *almsgiving,* we pay him tribute. In

prayer, we ask him leave, and *praise* is our rent to the great Lord, from whom we hold our all."

Thus also we express our souls' desire for our poor fellow-sinners. Deeply affected with the state of Heathens, Jews, Mahometans, and wicked Christians, we pour forth our souls in holy longings for their conversion, earnestly desiring the joyful day when it shall be said—"The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever." Rev. xi. 15.

IV. *Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.* God, the glorious Maker of the world, has a right to govern it. His will is the proper rule of his creatures' actions; and it is obeyed by them all, except by men and devils. God has made known his will to us in his word. The law of the ten commandments shows what obedience he requires of us; but, as fallen creatures, we have rendered ourselves incapable of perfect obedience to it, and so of obtaining life by it. God has graciously given us the law of faith, or the gospel of salvation, by Jesus Christ; and "this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another." But the natural man refuses obedience to this also; he is either unconcerned about salvation, or dislikes the way of it; and while he remains in this state, he cannot do the will of God in any respect acceptably; for "without faith it is impossible to please him." In short, "the carnal mind is enmity against God:" the will of the flesh is directly contrary to the will of God; but it accords with the will of Satan, sinners being "led captive by him at his will."

How necessary then is this petition—*Thy* will be done! And it includes, 1. *A desire to know it;* as the Psalmist prays, (cxliii. 10.) "Teach me to do thy

will, for thou art my God;" or, as converted Saul, "Lord what wilt thou have me to do?" 2. *A heart to do it;* a heart on which God has written his laws. I remember a person who told me, when he was teaching his child to say this prayer, and came to this petition—"*Thy* will be done," the child refused to say it, and would have it, "*My will* be done." This poor simple child was far more honest than many of us, who say, *thy* will be done, and yet determine to follow our own will: but the real Christian's desire is, "O that there were such an heart in me to fear God, and to keep all his commandments always!" Deut. v. 29. We pray also, 3. *For strength* to do the will of God; for, "*to will*" may be present, and yet how to perform that which is good we may not find: but, knowing that the Lord worketh in his people both *to will* and *to do*, we hereby pray that he would "make us perfect in every good work, to do his will; working in us that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ." This petition also includes holy submission to the will of his providence, however afflictive; and that we may learn to bear it without murmuring, knowing that it is his will, and for our good.

Now, we pray for grace to do all this, in imitation of the spirits of just men made perfect, and of the sinless angels in heaven. "God's will *is* done *in heaven.*" The angels that excel in strength do his commandment, hearkening to the voice of his word; they do it humbly, cheerfully, diligently, constantly; and so do glorified saints in heaven, "for there his servants shall serve him." So let it be *our* meat and drink to do the will of our heavenly Father, and to bear Christ's yoke, which is easy; and his burden, which is light.

V. *Give us this day our daily bread.* This petition implies our dependence on God for food and

all the supports and comforts of life. Man, as a fallen creature, has forfeited the good things of this life, and deserves to be deprived of them all. The earth was cursed for man's sake, therefore in sorrow and labour he eats of it; but it is through the goodness of God that he has power to labour: that rain from heaven and fruitful seasons are granted. It is "he who gives us our corn, and wine, and oil;" and though the poor man works hard for his daily bread, it is no less the gift of God. To him also we owe the appetite that makes our food pleasant, and the power of digestion that makes it nourishing.

Moderation in our desires is here expressed. We are not taught to ask for riches and honours; they are often the destructive snares of those who possess them: but we may lawfully ask for food and raiment, "for our heavenly Father knoweth that we have need of all these things;" ver. 22.; and having these, "we ought to be content."

We are not to ask for *weekly* bread, or *monthly* bread, or *yearly* bread; but for *daily* bread; for we must not boast of to-morrow, or depend on future years; but live in daily dependence on God, without anxious cares for a future time. "Sufficient to the day is the evil thereof:" and sufficient for the day is the good thereof: so that we are to exercise ourselves in daily prayer, and receive every meal and every morsel as the gift of a good God, which will make it sweeter.

The Christian will also ask for bread for his soul, as well as for his body. Christ is to the believer's soul, what food is to the body. He is the "bread of life;" and if we are born of God we shall daily desire to feed upon him in our heart, by faith with thanksgiving.

VI. *And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.* The petition is joined to the last by the

word *and*, which may teach us, that without the forgiveness of sins, the comforts of this life can do us no real good; "for what is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Every man is a sinner. There is not a creature who wants daily bread, that does not also want daily pardon; and yet how few are sensible of it? Sin is here compared to a debt. There is a debt of *duty* we owe to God; and, in case of failure, we contract a new debt to the justice of God. The debts we owe to man expose us to misery here; but the debts we owe to God expose us to eternal misery; for "the wages of sin is death." And be it remembered, we are not able to pay a single farthing of this debt: if ever we are delivered from going to the prison of hell, it must be by a free pardon, for so we here pray—"*Forgive us* our debts;" or, as it is elsewhere, "Forgive us our trespasses." God will take no composition. We can make no amends. It is not taking care not to contract a new debt that will discharge an old one: this will not do with our neighbours, nor will it do with God. Free forgiveness alone will prevent our punishment. But be it carefully observed, that though a sinner is justified freely, it is only "through the redemption that is in Christ." It costs us nothing; but it cost him dear. And it is only through faith in his blood that we can receive it. With believing and penitent hearts we must go to God by Jesus Christ, and plead for his mercy for Christ's sake.

At the same time we are here taught what is the true disposition of a gracious soul—a forgiving temper—"as we forgive our debtors;" that is, as we forgive those who have injured us in our property, person, or name. Not that our kindness to another deserves forgiveness at the hand of God; but that, as we cannot expect pardon from God while we refuse it to those who ask us for it, we may humbly

hope, that if we are enabled, by grace, to forgive others, God, whose thoughts and ways are infinitely above ours, will not reject our prayer for pardoning mercy through Jesus Christ.

VII. *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.* Those whose sins are forgiven will be afraid of sinning again; and, knowing the power of temptation, we pray to be kept from it. Now *temptation* is any thing which makes *trial* of us, and proves what is in our hearts. Afflictions are God's trials of us, for our good: but all Satan's temptations are to lead us into evil. The person who uses this prayer aright, is afraid of sin; knows the plague of his own heart; the power of his corruptions; the snares of the world, and the devices of the devil; and he offers up this petition to God, that he would keep him out of the way of such trials as would be too hard for him, or grant sufficient strength to resist and overcome the devil; "*the evil one;* the wicked one; the great tempter, who goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." But this must be accompanied with *watching*, and avoiding all wilful occasions of sin, or else these words do but mock God.

VIII. The conclusion of the prayer is—*For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever, Amen.* This shows us why we should pray to God, and why we may hope to be heard. The *kingdom* is his. God is king of all the world, and has a right to dispose of all things in it. The *power* is his, as well as the authority; whatever our wants are, he can supply them; whoever our enemies, he can subdue them. He therefore *can* answer our prayers; and as a loving father we hope he *will*. His then will be the *glory*. Whatever God does is for his own glory; and if we are disposed to give him all the glory of what he does for us, we may hope that our petitions will be granted. This kingdom, this power, this glory, are *for ever*; he

will never want the power to help; and if we are saved, we shall never cease to give him praise.

The force of the whole prayer lies in the *first* and *last* words of it—*Our Father*, and *Amen;* in the *first*, we apply to God in Christ, as reconciled to us; in the *last*, we set our seal to the whole, and say, *Amen; so let it be: so*, we humbly hope, *it shall be*, for Christ's sake.

CONCLUSION.

How awfully is this prayer abused! Ignorant people use it as a kind of charm; and think it enough to say the words, without considering the meaning. O beware, as you love your souls, of mocking God by thoughtless praying. Can you call *him* a Father, while you obey the devil? Will you say, "Hallowed be thy name," and yet profane it daily? What do you care for *his kingdom*, while you belong to another? or talk of God's will, without wishing to do it? Do you not forget him when you eat and drink? Are you not careless about the forgiveness of your sins, adding daily to the dreadful debt; and perhaps living in malice and wrath? How can you pray that God will not lead you into temptation, when you run wilfully into the way of it; frequenting the alehouse, the playhouse, the fair, the wakes, and the company of the lewd, the profane, and the drunken? Dear fellow-creature, permit me to say, that thus contradicting your prayers by your life, you cannot expect to be heard: nay, God may justly say to you at last, "Out of thine own mouth will I condemn thee, thou wicked servant." But God forbid! Think over this prayer before you use it again; and beg of God to enable you to use it with understanding and sincerity, that the rich blessings asked for in it may be your's, and God be glorified in your everlasting salvation.

Those who are "born of God," and have the "Spirit of grace and supplication" teaching them to pray, will not confine themselves at all times to these words; yet they may be used with great comfort and edification. God is your Father; he is more disposed to give than you to ask: plead that dear relation. Let his glory be your first desire; the increase of his kingdom your highest wish. Let his will be done in love, by saints below as well as those above; then fear not to depend on his providence for daily supplies. "There is forgiveness with him that he may be feared;" and he that is for us is greater than he who is against us. Though surrounded with snares, his sheep are in his hand: and they shall be kept by his power, through faith, unto salvation. Then shall prayer be turned into praise; and all the ransomed of the Lord shall unite in full chorus, and say,—"Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen and Amen."

SERMON XV.

MATT. VII. 21.

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father, which is in heaven.

WE have before us an eternal world, in which there are but two states, the one inexpressibly happy, the other inconceivably wretched; and in one of these each of us must very soon be fixed.—But in *which!*—Is it impossible we can be indifferent about knowing in which, when an hour, a moment, may place us in one of them? Perhaps you will say, How can a person know? I answer, It may be known, clearly known, by the word of God; for in the Scriptures the characters of saints and sinners are exactly drawn. It is plainly laid down who shall go to heaven, and who shall go to hell; and, having this rule, we are often exhorted to try ourselves by it; "to examine ourselves whether we be in the faith;" and thus "to make our calling and election sure." The words of our text are of this nature; and you will remember that they are the words of Jesus Christ, who is to be our Judge; so that the same lips which declared this to us will pronounce upon each of us the sentence of life or death. O that we may now learn what all the world shall then learn, that true religion does not consist in words, or profession of regard to Christ, or in gifts, or zeal, or usefulness; but in doing the will of God from the heart.

I. We learn from these words, *that at the great day there will be an earnest desire in many to enter into the kingdom of heaven.* By "the kingdom of heaven" is sometimes intended the kingdom of grace in the church of Christ on earth; but here it means the state of glory above, where Jesus shall reign in all his divine glory, and all his subjects enjoy perfect bliss. That this is referred to appears from the next verse—"Many will say unto me *in that day*, Lord, Lord." In *that* day; it is not said in *what* day; nor was there any need to say what day, for all the disciples of Christ know what is meant by it. They are often thinking on that day when they shall "see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great glory:"—"when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with all his mighty angels in flaming fire." This is called *the great day;* a day of the greatest grandeur, a day of the greatest joy, and a day of the greatest terror. It is also called *the day of the Lord*, and *the day of Christ*. This is *man's* day; yea, the *devil's* day; when sinners triumph, and Satan reigns; but the triumph of the wicked is short, and the prince of this world shall be judged.

O how careless are most people now about this great day! Scoffers abound in these latter times, and say, "Where is the promise of his coming?" Now and then, indeed, a just concern has prevailed for a season; as under John's ministry, "the kingdom of heaven suffered violence, and all men were for pressing into it." When a nation has been frightened by an earthquake or a plague, multitudes have been alarmed for a while. A few years ago, thousands followed some eminent preachers of the gospel into the open fields to hear the word; and we have lately read of great awakenings in America and other places. O that we could now see the same in Britain! O that now, when the judgments of

the Lord are abroad in the earth, this sinful nation would learn righteousness!

But O, how will it be when the day comes! How will it be when the trumpet shall sound! What terror will seize the heart of the wicked man! "Ah," will he say, "Is the dreadful day come at last; the day I so often heard of, so often laughed at? O my folly! O my vain and hurtful lusts! For what have I lost my soul? For the sake of my business, my pleasures, my companions; I have lost my soul, my heaven, my all. O that I had never been born!" But perhaps, recovering himself a little, he may say, —"Am not I a Christian? Was I not baptized and confirmed, and did I not take the sacrament? Lord, Lord, open to me!"—But it will be too late; the door is shut; many shall *then* seek to enter in, but shall not be able. The Judge will *profess unto them, I never knew ye: depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.* And this leads us to observe, in the next place, that,

II. *A mere profession of religion will then be found insufficient.* The judgment of man carries it now; but it is a small matter to be judged of man's judgment. Man looks only at the outward appearance, but the Lord searcheth the heart; and he will then make the result of his search public. The young man may now rejoice in his youthful lusts and pleasures; he may walk in the ways of his heart, and in the sight of his eyes, but let him know, (and O that he may consider it,) that "for all these things God will bring him into judgment." Eccles. xi. 9. Yea, God will bring every *secret thing* into judgment; what is spoken in the ear in the closet shall be proclaimed on the house-top; and then shall the secrets of all hearts be made manifest. Then shall many that were first be last; and many that were last shall be first. Then shall the hypocrites be detected and exposed. Then shall a separation be made between

the tares and the wheat; between the sheep and the goats; between the foolish and the wise virgins. Then shall he say to poor vain formalists, *I never knew you, &c.* But let us more particularly examine the pretensions of these people.

It should seem that they used to *pray;* they used to say, "Lord, Lord!" It is certainly a bad sign for any one that he does not pray; and it is generally a good sign when a person does pray; but it is not a certain sign of grace. "The wicked" sometimes "pour out a prayer, when God's chastening is upon them." Afflictions will sometimes extort prayers and vows, and many duties of religion; but when the affliction is over, there is an end of their devotion; and they return to their sins, as the dog to his vomit. So there may be transient convictions of sin, and terrific fears of hell, especially in the time of sickness and apprehension of death; and these may lead not only to a temporary reformation, but to doing many things, as Herod did when he heard John gladly, and as numbers of persons in popish countries who do penance for their sins; but there may be all this and much more while men remain workers of iniquity.

Again, these people appeared to be *zealous* in religion, as the repetition of the word, *Lord, Lord,* seems to intimate; and we find in the next verse, that they "prophesied in the name of Christ." Most of the prophets, especially the stated prophets, were "holy men;" but some, especially of the occasional ones, as Balaam, Saul, and Caiaphas, were wicked men. So were *some* of the first preachers of Christianity, and so are *many* now. This is an awful word for the carnal clergy of any church, and wicked preachers of any denomination; and it shews that zeal for religion is no absolute proof of sincerity in it.

These men did more still:—"they cast out devils in Christ's name." When Christ was upon earth, and for some ages after, the devil was permitted to possess the bodies of men; but Christ and his apostles were able to cast them out; and so did common Christians for a long time after, by the mention of his name. But this and other extraordinary gifts were not confined to real Christians; wicked professors sometimes did it; and here, we see, boasted of it, and pleaded it: but the plea is not admitted. Other "wonderful works" they also did; for so the Lord permitted, in order to promote the spread of Christianity; but what availed all this while the devil was not cast out of their own hearts, and the wonderful works of God's grace had never been wrought in their own souls? Men may be famous and useful in the church, yet, after all, be "cast-aways."

These people also professed obedience to Christ; they called him Lord. He is "Lord of all." He has all power in heaven and earth; and to him every knee shall bow. But it is to no purpose to call him Master and Lord, if we do not the things which he commands. Christ is not deceived by compliments; and he will reject that false devotion which consists only in words. "Saying and doing are two things, often parted in the conversation of men. He that said *I go, Sir*, never stirred a step." Matt. xxi. 30.

Now, notwithstanding all the professions of these people, it appears, from the words of Christ himself, that they were *workers of iniquity*. They loved sin, they lived in sin, they made a trade of sin; it was their calling and business, at which they daily worked, as a man at his proper trade. All this they did under the mask of religion, and are therefore rejected—*Depart from me, I never knew ye.*

Observe here, my friends, the deceitfulness of sin, and the deceitfulness of the heart. Though these

formal professors lived in sin, and must have known that they did so, yet they continued to depend on their outward forms, and to approach the bar of God with a lie in their right hands. Alas! how many deceivers live and die deceived, and their fatal mistake is never detected till it is past remedy! Just like the Jews of old, to whom St. Paul thus speaks, Rom. ii. 17. "Behold, thou art called a Jew, and restest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; and art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light to them which are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes; which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth of the law." These outward things the Jews rested in, presumed upon, and were proud of; while they were ignorant of the spiritual design of their own rites; and many of them so wicked, "that the name of God was blasphemed among the Gentiles" by their sins. They were strangers to that important distinction which the Apostle makes, ver. 28, 29, of that chapter, where he says, "He is not a Jew, which is one *outwardly;* neither is that circumcision which is outward in the *flesh;* but he is a Jew which is one *inwardly;* and circumcision is that of the *heart,* in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God." Thus, you see, there is a great difference between *outward* and *inward* religion; between the religion of form, and the religion of the heart. What circumcision, sacrifices, and the temple, were to the Jews of old, baptism, the Lord's supper, and public worship are to professing Christians now; and as the ignorant Jews put their trust in their church privileges, so do many nominal Christians now: but if this be all, their praise will not be of God, but of men only.

This is evident from our text, in which a claim on Christ, founded on these things, is rejected. *I never knew you*; that is, "I never esteemed or approved of you as my true disciples and servants; nor will I own or accept you as such. Depart from me: I now banish you from my blessed and glorious presence to everlasting misery and despair, O ye wilful transgressors." How dreadful will that word *Depart* be! How did Peter dread the thought of departing from Christ! When, many of his disciples having forsaken him, he said to the Apostles, "*Will you also go away?*" Peter, in the name of the rest, replied, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." A holy soul dreads the idea of departing from Christ by apostacy; but how terrible will it be to hear the great Judge command us to depart! God grant that now we may depart from all iniquity. If there be any iniquity in us which we know not, merciful Saviour, discover it to us, and deliver us from it; and never let us hear thee say, "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity." We now proceed to the last and most pleasing part of our subject, and observe, in the

Third place, *That all true and obedient believers will be admitted into the heavenly kingdom.* Here is our Lord's description of them, of every one of them; *He that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.* The will of God cannot be known but by his word. The Scriptures are given us on purpose that we may know his will; and there are two principal things in the Scriptures, namely, what we are to *believe* concerning God, and the *duty* which he requires of us; or, in other words, *Faith* and *Practice*; and both these are equally necessary; for we can never do the will of God in holy obedience without first believing in God through Jesus

Christ; the whole of the Christian religion consisting in this, *faith, which worketh by love.*

Faith is first necessary in order to obedience; so Christ taught the people, who asked him, *What must we do that we may work the works of God?* John vi. 28, &c. *This is the work of God,* said he, *that ye believe on him whom he hath sent;* as if he had said, "The great and important duty which I am come to point out to you, and which leads the way to all others, and is necessary to the acceptance of your persons, and of all your obedience, and which therefore God commands, approves, and is the author of, is this:—That ye cordially embrace, and yield yourselves up by faith to me, as the true Messiah, the only Mediator, according to the discoveries I make of myself, and the way of salvation by me." And St. John also says, 1 John iii. 23. *This is his commandment: That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.* When people read or hear of the commandments, they think the Ten Commandments only are meant; but this is a great mistake: for the very first business of a poor, guilty, helpless sinner, is to come to Christ for salvation. We are not to suppose that we must first prepare, or make ourselves worthy, by sorrow for sin, purifying our hearts, or reforming our lives, before we may venture to trust in Christ; all these are proper fruits and effects of faith. We must believe in him "*who justifieth the* UNGODLY," and not think first to make ourselves godly, and then hope in him. Faith is the first work. Look to Jesus. Come to Jesus. Trust in Jesus; and then a good hope of pardoning mercy will incline the heart to love him, and to hate every evil way. We cannot do good works till we are in Christ by faith, any more than the branch of a tree can produce fruit when separate from the stock. Christ is the

vine and we are the branches; and, by virtue of union to him, we become fruitful in every good word and work.

This also is the will of God, even our sanctification. God is holy; therefore must we be holy. We are chosen in Christ unto sanctification and obedience. The Lord gives his people a new heart, upon which he writes his laws, which, through his grace, become pleasant to them. Being crucified with Christ, the old man of sin is crucified. They reckon themselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. The daily inquiry of a new-born soul is "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" —"Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God."— "I will run in the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart." And this disposition will shew itself in all the relations and circumstances of life; in the family, in business, and in all common actions, as well as in the house of God. Whether we are husbands, wives, children, servants, or subjects, filling up our places to God's glory will be our constant aim. Particularly shall we be desirous to fulfil the royal law of love to our brethren, on which great stress is laid in the New Testament; for the law, as far as it relates to our neighbour, is fulfilled in one word —*Love.*

Now, persons of this character shall have an abundant entrance into the kingdom and glory of Jesus Christ. While formalists and hypocrites are shut out, the blessed Redeemer will smile upon them, and say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:" and he will mention, as the evidence of their election, and fruit of their faith, the acts of Christian love which they performed to their hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, or imprisoned brethren; taking them as kindly as if they had been done to himself; for inasmuch as

ye did it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me." See Matt. xx. 40, &c.

APPLICATION.

And now, my friends, having heard how awful the fate of the formalists and hypocrites will prove at the great day, it surely becomes us seriously to examine of what kind *our* religion is. It plainly appears, from what has been said, "that the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power," 1 Cor. iv. 20. And as there are many who have the form of godliness, but who deny the power of it, it is most necessary, as we value the salvation of our souls, to determine whether our religion is in form or power, that so we may know whether the great Judge will own or disown us at the last. Consider therefore what your religion consists in, and what you depend upon. Is it that you were born and bred a Christian; that you were baptized; that you have gone to church or meeting; that you can say the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments; that you have taken the Sacrament, been sorry for your sins, and do to others as you would be done by? Or that you have done your best, and put your trust in God? Are these your pleas? Is this your religion? Then pardon me if I speak the truth in love, and tell you plainly this will not do. These empty boasts prove that you are a stranger to true heart religion. All these things you may imagine you have done; but, if this be all, it is only crying, Lord, Lord! Had you gone much farther than this, and equalled the Pharisees in their zeal and devotion, all would be insufficient, without a conviction of your sin and misery; a heart humbled for your iniquities; a view of the only way of salvation through Jesus Christ; and that faith in him which purifies the heart,

works by love, and overcomes the world. Be not deceived then. Satisfy yourselves with nothing short of that which Christ will accept and approve at last. This is doing the will of God; which will, as you have now heard, requires, in the first place, believing in the Lord Jesus Christ; coming to him as a guilty helpless sinner, and receiving him as your wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Come then, my fellow-sinner, to Jesus. Beg of him to teach you. Beg of him to wash you in his blood: beg of him to give you his Spirit, and enable you, from a principle of love, to forsake every evil way, and cleave to him with purpose of heart. Then shall you know that the "kingdom of God is not meat and drink,"—forms and ceremonies; "but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

Let me drop a word of *caution* to those who perhaps may boast that they are no hypocrites, for they do not pretend to any religion. Can you think that this will be admitted as an excuse? Will you dare to approach the awful bar of God, and plead, "Lord, I never pretended to serve thee? I never thought it worth my while to know or worship thee: I loved the world and my sins so well that I lived like an Atheist." Oh, Sirs, deceive not yourselves; answer that question if you can:—"How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation!" Formalists and hypocrites pay some compliment to religion, by counterfeiting and imitating it, yet will they perish; but you despise it. You treat the blessed God and the gracious Saviour as unworthy your notice. How then can you expect but to have your portion with hypocrites and unbelievers, and to be turned into hell with all those who forget God?

These words may probably be very alarming to the tender spirits of some who truly fear God. Some of the sincere and humble followers of the Lamb may

be ready to fear lest he should be angry with them at last, and say, "Depart, I never knew you." But my dear brethren, tell me, is it not your heart's desire to know and to do the will of God, particularly in those two grand points—faith and holiness? Say; is not Jesus high in your esteem; the chief of ten thousand, and altogether lovely; and would not you gladly be conformed to him in cheerfully doing and patiently suffering the will of God? Take courage, then; these words are as full of comfort for you, as they are full of terror to formalists and hypocrites. The Friend of sinners will say to his dear people, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you," and for which my grace prepared your souls on earth. "Enter ye into the joy of your Lord."

And now is any one of you beginning to say, "I fear I have been deceived,—I fear my religion will not stand the test,—I have mistaken the shadow for the substance,—the shell for the kernel. What shall I do?" I answer, It is an infinite mercy that you have discovered your mistake; you might have died deceived, and have been rejected by Christ; but it may be hoped that it is a token for good, and the dawn of mercy to your soul. Let your fears bring you to your knees; and at the throne of grace implore divine aid. Say with the Psalmist, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

SERMON XVI.

LUKE XVIII. 13.

God be merciful to me a Sinner!

THERE is a time approaching when MERCY will appear to all mankind the most valuable thing in the world. Figure to yourselves the awful hour, when you shall be about to quit this mortal state, and launch into an unknown world; realize the moment, still more awful, when the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised; when the great white throne shall be erected, and the assembled world shall appear before the universal Judge; when the grand separation shall be made between the righteous and wicked; the one being placed at the right hand, the other at the left of Christ,—then, my friends, then will the full value of *mercy* be known. O what a word will *mercy* then be! a world for *mercy* then! "Vessels of mercy," obtainers of mercy—how will they shout and sing, "O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever!" While others, in all the bitterness of fruitless woe, shall cry, O that we had but known the need of mercy, the way of mercy, and the value of mercy, while it might have been had! But now the door is shut; "the mercies of God are clean gone for ever, and he will be favourable no more."

With this amazing scene in prospect, let us address ourselves to the text, and to the parable of the Pharisee and Publican, of which it is a part. The *introduction* to it, and the *conclusion* of it, will be the

best key to its true meaning. Ver. 9. "Our Saviour spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others." Here are two bad things in their character:—1. *They trusted in themselves*, which no man can do if he knows the holy law of God; and, 2. *They despised others*, which we cannot do if we know our own hearts. The conclusion shows how God dislikes such people, while he accepts a poor dejected sinner: for "every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." ver. 14.

"Two men went up into the temple to pray: the one a Pharisee, and the other a Publican." ver. 10. The Pharisees were a sect of people in those days in high repute for religion; they separated themselves from others, as if more holy; they distinguished themselves by peculiar zeal for ceremonies; but many of them were rank hypocrites, neglecting the religion of the heart, and indulging themselves in cruelty and oppression. The Publican also appeared at the same place, at the same time, and on the same errand; but how different their characters! Had we seen them both together, we should perhaps have thought better of the Pharisee than of the Publican: "for man looketh only at the outward appearance, but God looketh at the heart." Very different motives brought them there. The Pharisee went because it was a public place, and he wished to be seen and admired; the Publican went because it was "a house of prayer," and he wanted to pour forth his soul before God. Thus, my friends, in all our places of worship, there is a mixture of characters; but let us remember, God is the searcher of the heart, and he knows what brings us to his house.

Ver. 11. "The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself;"—he stood *by himself*, with great formality, in a place where the people must notice him;

he prayed thus *with himself*, and *to himself*, not to God :—Ah, sirs, there are many people pray to themselves; they speak not to God; their words never reach him; they utter sounds, but not desires; this praying will do no good. It is remarkable that in all the Pharisee's prayer there is not one petition; he came to pray; but surely he forgot his errand, for he asks nothing. Praise to God is certainly a proper and noble part of prayer; but though he pretends to praise, he only boasts. But let us hear his fine prayer: "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are." What is this but ignorance, pride, and censoriousness? Besides, he begins his prayer with a lie. He was as other men are; for all men are sinners: in this respect all are on a level; *there is no difference*, as the scripture speaks, Rom. iii. 22, 23. It is true that some men are restrained from sins that others commit; but the seeds of every sin are by nature in the heart of every man; and if we have not actually committed them, we owe it the restraining power, or to the changing grace of God. The Pharisee seems to admit of this by saying, "God, I thank thee;" but we have reason to doubt his sincerity in so saying, and to think they were words of course and form: for so proud a heart as his could not be duly sensible of his obligations to divine grace; and there are many, who like him, use words of praise, but feel no gratitude to God. His meaning was probably this, "O God, thou author of my being, I thank thee for the noble powers with which thou hast endowed me, by my own wise and careful improvement of which I have kept myself from being so wicked as other people."

You will observe that there were two principal parts of the law; the one respected morals, the other ceremonials. Now the Pharisee takes care to brag of his regard to both; and first to the moral law, *I am not as other men are*—well, what are other men?

Why, according to his account, it should seem that most other men are, *extortioners, unjust, adulterers.* At all times there are too many such people as these; but his way of mentioning them was merely for the purpose of exalting himself and his own sect, some of whom were equally criminal, though under the mask of religion. It may be, the Pharisee was not an "extortioner"—did not cruelly oppress his neighbour; but we have Christ's authority for it that the Pharisees were generally "covetous," and some of them "devoured widows' houses." He says he was not "unjust"—not a knave or a cheat; but could he say he had never coveted his neighbour's goods?—for this is heart-robbery in the sight of God. He says he was not an "adulterer;" it may be so; but our Lord says, that "he who looketh upon a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery already with her in his heart." Matth. v. 28. But this was the folly of such men; they washed the outside of the cup and the platter, but *within* they were "full of extortion and excess; righteous without, but full of hypocrisy and iniquity within;" so Christ declares, Matth. xxiii. 26, &c.

Not content with boasting of himself, he must abuse the poor Publican—"I am not as this Publican." What business had he with the Publican? He ought to have rejoiced to see him in the temple; he might have hoped it was a symptom of his reformation; he should have gone and shaken hands with him, and given him some good advice. But his proud heart spurns at the broken-hearted sinner; just as modern Pharisees, who look upon mourning souls as poor, canting, whining hypocrites, far beneath their notice. There was a great deal of cruelty in this; he could not say his own prayers without putting in a caveat, as it were, against the petition of his poor neighbour.

But the Pharisee has yet more to boast of. He had not only "done nobody any harm," as the vulgar phrase is, but he had been mighty religious; *he kept Lent all the year. I fast*, said he, *twice a week.* Occasional fasting, in order to humble ourselves before God for our sins, is very commendable, whether by private persons or public bodies; but the Pharisee's fasting was not for that purpose, but for ostentation, and with a view to merit at the hand of God, as appears by his boasting of it. Beside this, he tells God, *he gave tithes of all he possessed;* not only of what the law of Moses required, but of the herbs in his garden; he devoted a tenth part of all he had to religious uses, whether titheable or not by the law.

Thus you have the pharisee's prayer; a prayer which God rejected; for though he justified himself, God did not justify him. And now, my friends, let us examine ourselves. Is there nothing of the Pharisee's spirit in us? Do we not hear people speaking the same language sometimes? Is not this all the hope of some people, that they never did any person harm; that they pay every one his due; and perhaps that they go to church constantly—behave decently—take the sacrament—give alms—and so on? How often do we hear this language on a dying bed? Poor ignorant souls rush into the presence of God with no other foundation for their hope than the Pharisee had; while we hear not a word of true humility, poverty of spirit, sense of sin, or hope in Jesus, as the sinner's only friend and hope. O, Sirs, beware of resembling the Pharisee. Pleas like his may please men, but they will not succeed with God: rather let us resemble the poor broken-hearted Publican, whose character and prayer we next consider.

Ver. 13. "And the Publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but

smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner? By a *Publican* you are not to understand a keeper of a public-house, but a tax-gatherer. The Jews were at this time subject to the Roman emperor, and paid him taxes, which were sometimes farmed by the rich Publicans, who in the execution of their office, were too often dishonest and oppressive: on account of which, and on account of the taxes themselves, which were vexatious to the Jews, the name of a Publican was abominable, and was classed with that of a harlot or sinner.

Whether this Publican was an extortioner or not, we cannot say. Doubtless he was a sinner; and by some means or other he became a convinced sinner; a penitent sinner, and a praying sinner. Perhaps this was the first time that he ever prayed in his life; for sinning generally keeps men from praying. It is plain that the Spirit of God had humbled his heart; he was one of those blessed men who are "poor in spirit," and he was one of those blessed mourners who "shall be comforted."

Observe his posture—*he stood afar off*—at a great distance from the holy place, where the priests officiated; he knew this became him, for he had lived at a great distance from God as a sinner; and he knew he deserved that God should for ever behold him afar off.

Observe also his dejected looks—he could not look up—he thought it would be presumptuous in him to lift up his eyes to heaven, the habitation of God's glory. Other sinners have thought the same, —David says, Ps. xl. 12, "Innumerable evils have compassed me about—mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up." But those downcast eyes attracted the eyes of God; he could not lift up his eyes, but he lifted up his heart; and there is no beauty in the sight of God greater

than blushing for sin. "For to this man will I look," saith the Lord, "even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." Isa. lxv. 2.

Another mark of his repentance was his *smiting his breast*; he knew his heart—he did not think it *a good heart*, as some very ignorant people speak; no, he knew "the plague of his heart;" he knew it was the seat and source of all his sins, and by smiting on his breast he seemed as if he would take revenge upon his own wicked heart; it expresses his indignation against himself, and the vehemence of his anger against sin. Men and brethren, what do you know of such a disposition as this? When were you thus angry with yourselves, and filled with shame and confusion of face because of your sins? Know this, that such is the temper of all who are taught of God; and if you have never felt in this manner, you are yet strangers to true repentance.

Now we come to his prayer. It was very short, but very good: no man ever offered a better, or to better purpose. Not that the mere words are of any avail: too many people use such words profanely, when they say on a surprise, "God bless us!" or "Lord have mercy on us!" but such praying as this is the way to get a curse, not a blessing. When the Publican said, "God be merciful to me a sinner," he felt what he said; he felt he was a perishing sinner, and he felt an earnest desire for mercy.

He calls himself *a sinner*, or *the sinner*, as some would render it; or *the chief of sinners*, as Paul called himself. The word *sinner* was a term of reproach among the Jews, and seemed to be applied chiefly to a harlot, or some notorious offender; but the Publican takes it to himself. It is very likely he spake this aloud, in the hearing of the Pharisee, and of others who did not think themselves sinners; for he

was not unwilling to appear before men what he well knew he was before God. He would not have been angry with that sort of preaching which lays men low; nor would he have been displeased with a friend who should have said, You are a very great sinner. But say, my friends, what would *you* think of a person who would charge *you* in that manner? Would you not be very angry, and say, "I am no worse than others?" But a true penitent can never find words sufficient to express the sense he has of his own vileness.

If we know the meaning and extent of the Ten Commandments, we shall say after each of them, "Lord, have mercy upon us!" And if we see any thing of the holiness, majesty, and glory of the great God, we shall cry with Isaiah, "Woe is me, for I am undone;" or with Job, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." No person truly enlightened will say, as many have done, "I am not a great sinner;" for, in fact, there cannot be a little sinner, unless there were a little law to break, a little God to offend, and a little wrath to incur. It is too common for persons to comfort themselves with the idea that they are not such great sinners as some others; many dying people do this, and even wretches at the gallows have done so. But this is very absurd; for the question is not, whether we have sinned as much as others, but whether we have sinned at all, that is, whether we have broken the holy law of God! If so, we are sinners, and stand exposed to the just wrath of the Most High; nor can we escape it but by partaking of that great mercy for which the publican prayed.

You will next observe, that his sense of sin and danger put him upon prayer. Many people live without prayer; and what is the reason? They

do not feel the need of mercy; for this is the first thing a convinced sinner prays for; and it is a good sign of grace when a desire for mercy sends a man to his knees. Angels rejoice on such an occasion, and point to the new-born soul, saying, "Behold, he prayeth!" My friends, do you pray for mercy? If not, how can you expect it; and what must become of you without it? O that you may begin to pray!

This poor man cried to the Lord; and whither can a creature fly for help but to God? He is our maker; he is our governor; he is our judge; he is able to save or destroy; he is offended with our sins; yet, he is most gracious and ready to forgive. How reasonable then, that a guilty, helpless sinner, ready to perish, should apply "to him that is able to save to the uttermost all who come to him by Jesus Christ!"

He begs for MERCY. What is mercy? We know what it is by our own feelings. It is compassion to the miserable; it is a disposition to pity and relieve the distressed; and we never speak of *mercy* but with reference to *misery*. It is not, then, a light, unfeeling use of solemn words, that can encourage us to hope for mercy: it is not saying, without feeling, "Lord have mercy upon us! Christ have mercy upon us!" but it is coming with the Publican's spirit, with his broken heart, with his remorse, with his desires, and in earnest prayer claiming this precious blessing.

Observe, it is *mercy* he asks. Here is not a word of *merit*. Mercy and merit, are opposite things. The Pharisee's prayer was a mere boast of meritorious deeds; the Publican has nothing to plead; nor does he ask for wealth, or honour, or pleasure; his heart is dead to these; all his desires centre in one, and that one is mercy:—

"Mercy, good Lord, mercy I ask,
This is the total sum;
For mercy, Lord! is all my suit;
O let thy mercy come!"

But the petition, *be merciful,* includes something more than is commonly understood by it; the word translated *merciful,* has respect to the atonement made by blood; to the sacrifices offered up at the temple; which were types of Christ, "whom God hath sent forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood." Rom. iii. 25. At the temple, in the court of which the Publican stood, there was a lamb offered every morning at nine o'clock, and every evening at three; and these were the hours of prayer; so that the pious Jew came then to pray, that by virtue of the atonement of Christ represented by blood, and of his intercession represented by the incense, their prayers might find acceptance. His prayer then was —"God be propitious to me a sinner—accept the atonement in my behalf—let my soul be cleansed in the blood of Christ." In this manner, by faith in Jesus, let us seek the mercy of God. Let us not dream of mere absolute mercy. "A God all mercy, is a God unjust." The mercy of God cannot be bestowed without regard to his justice. Now God has glorified his justice by punishing sin in the person of our glorious Redeemer, upon whom "he laid the iniquities of us all," and through whom he is, at once, "a just God and a Saviour." In this way, and in no other, can a sinner obtain mercy; for our Lord declares, that no man cometh to the Father but by him; and no mercy cometh to the sinner but through him; but in his dear name we may "come boldly to the throne of grace, and so obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need."

Thus came the Publican, and in this way he suc-

ceeded. It was not the depth of his humility, the sincerity of his repentance, nor the fervency of his devotion, that merited acceptance: these dispositions were the gifts of God, and could merit nothing: but it was the merit of the Redeemer's precious blood, typified by the blood of lambs, which he pleaded, and which shall never be pleaded in vain. Our Lord tells us, ver. 14, "This man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other," or *not the other;* the reason of which, he adds, "For every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." O what a blessing! "He went down to his house justified;" there was no condemnation to him: he was accepted in the Beloved; he had passed from death to life. Happy man! he might "eat his bread with gladness, and drink his wine," or water either, "with a merry heart, for God accepted his works."

TO CONCLUDE.

Shall we not then "go and do likewise?" Are we not sinners? Fly instantly to the throne of grace. The Lord waits to be gracious. This is the accepted time; lose it not by delay. To-morrow may be too late. Now then, with the Publican's spirit, let each of us cry, God be merciful to me, the sinner!

But, O beware of the Pharisee's spirit! Every man is born a Pharisee. Ask your little children why they hope to go to heaven; and if they have not been better taught, you will find their hope is, because they are not so bad as others. Would to God it were not so with grown-up persons too! But let no one dare to persist in a self-righteous course; "for he that exalteth himself shall be abased"—abased even to hell. Renounce then your own righteousness, as St. Paul, the converted Pharisee, did, who says,

Phil. iii. 7. "What things were *gain* to me, those I counted loss for Christ; yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him."

The Publican's success is a great encouragement to every sensible sinner seeking for mercy. Seek like him, and like him you shall obtain it. And O let those who have obtained it be full of joy, "Praise the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever!" And as an evidence of having obtained mercy from God, shew mercy to men. "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful."

Behold, how sinners disagree,
The Publican and Pharisee!
One doth his righteousness proclaim,
The other owns his guilt and shame.

This man at humble distance stands,
And cries for grace with lifted hands;
That boldly rises near the throne,
And talks of duties he has done.

The Lord their different language knows,
And different answers he bestows;
The humble soul with grace he crowns,
Whilst on the proud his anger frowns.

Dear Father! let me never be
Join'd with the boasting Pharisee;
I have no merits of my own,
But plead the sufferings of thy Son.

WATTS.

SERMON XVII.

ROMANS x. 1.

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.

TRUE religion consists chiefly in *love to God*, and *love to man;* and wherever one of these is found, there is the other also. It was love that brought the Saviour down from the throne of glory to this mean and wretched world, that he might "seek and save those who were lost." While he lived on earth, "he went about doing good;" and when he returned to heaven, he commanded his ministers and people to follow his example, and to do good to all men as they should have opportunity. The apostles and first Christians gladly obeyed, and were very active in spreading abroad the knowledge of their gracious Master, and his great salvation. Among these, St. Paul was one of the most zealous. Our text is an expression of his strong desire for the salvation of his countrymen; and the particular reason of his anxiety was, because he knew they were not in the way to obtain salvation. They were seeking salvation by their own works, "for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone." Knowing therefore the danger of their being eternally lost, he expresses his feelings in these words, "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." And will you my friends, who are here present, permit us to say that we trust we are moved by the same desire? If any person should

enquire, why we come here to pray, and sing, and read; we reply, For no other reason than this, that we may promote your salvation; that we may stir you up to consider your need of it; that we may shew you, from the Gospel, the only true way of it, and put you upon seeking it immediately. Observe then,

I. That serious Christians plainly see the dangerous state in which many of their neighbours are.

II. That they earnestly desire their deliverance from it.

I. We observe that serious Christians plainly perceive the dangerous state of unconverted sinners around them. We cannot tell what the grace of God may do hereafter for the worst of men; and the condition of some may be doubtful; but, in many cases, it is too evident that many are in the "gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity." This appears,

1. *From their living in open sin;* for indeed "some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment." St. Paul says, "the works of the flesh are manifest," among which he names "adultery, fornication, uncleanness, wrath, murder, and drunkenness." Gal. v. 19. Our Saviour has directed us to judge of men by their fruits—"for every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit;" and he adds (observe his solemn words), "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." Matt. vii. 17. We are forced to conclude, therefore, that "if men live after the flesh, they must die;" that if they proceed in the broad road, it must be to destruction; and that "the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Some men are evidently "men of the world," "servants of sin," and "captives of Satan;" such, to whom our Lord said, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do."

2. *Carelessness about religion* is another alarming

symptom of a graceless, and therefore dangerous, state. There are many who have no concern about their souls or salvation. Like Gallio, they "care for none of these things." But this carelessness is as strong a proof of being in a state of nature and of wrath as living in open sin is; for it is written, Heb. ii. 3, "How shall we escape if we *neglect* so great salvation?" To neglect this salvation is to omit all those duties which are necessary to a profitable hearing and keeping of the word preached. How many are there who every sabbath turn their backs on the house of God, and spend the day in idleness and sinful pleasure! How many are there who never look into the Bible that they may become wise to salvation! How many who never lift up their hearts to God in prayer! Now, how shall such escape? Those who despised the law of Moses died without mercy; but to despise the gospel is a greater crime, and deserves a greater punishment. Those who seek not mercy now, according to the gospel, shall never have it. "This is the acceptable time; this the day of salvation:" if this be neglected, let poor sinners expect no more to hear of mercy through all eternity.

3. *Formality in religion* is another evidence of being in a dangerous condition. There are some who dare not omit all religious duties, public and private, but they are like the Pharisees, "who drew nigh to God with their mouth, and honoured him with their lips, but their heart was far from him;" by many religious ceremonies "they washed the outside of the cup and platter, but within they were full of extortion and excess." See Matt. xv. and xxiii. How many say their prayers like parrots, without knowing their meaning! How many go to church only to see and be seen; and when they come away, are full of mirth and folly; thinking no more of what has passed, and spending the rest of the day in worldly conversation or amuse-

ment! Others think, that because they belong to a good church, and have been baptized, and say their prayers, and take the sacrament, all is well with them; while they are strangers to *heart-work* in religion; were never alarmed on account of their sins; never humbled for their sins; never fled to Jesus for refuge from their sins; and never knew any thing of that great change of heart, called in Scripture, regeneration, or the new-birth. Now, when we see our neighbours content with this poor empty form of godliness, and denying the power thereof, we cannot but be deeply concerned on account of their danger.

4. There is another thing which alarms us on their behalf; that is, *when we see them receive for truth, great and fundamental errors as to the doctrines of religion.* We know it is commonly said, that it does not signify what a man believes, if he does but live a good life. But we testify against this opinion, as destructive to the souls of men. Did not the great Redeemer come into the world to enlighten it! Is he not the great teacher, who, by his word and Spirit, reveals the will of God for our salvation? Has he not promised his people that they shall "know the truth, and that the truth shall make them free!" And has he not said that his sheep hear and know his voice, but will not follow the voice of a stranger! How then can error be harmless? The Scripture speaks of "damnable heresies," as well as damnable vices. Surely it is of great importance that we have right views of the blessed God, as to his holiness, justice, and mercy; that we have right views of ourselves, as fallen, guilty, helpless sinners; and especially that we have right views of Jesus Christ, and of the nature and way of salvation through him by faith. It was the want of these that made St. Paul use the words of our text. And this leads us to observe, in the next place,

II. *That serious Christians earnestly and sincerely*

desire the salvation of their neighbours, whom they thus perceive to be in a dangerous state.

If love to our neighbour requires that we should pity and help him in the time of sickness, poverty, or any other kind of temporal distress; how much more that we should care for his soul, and labour to prevent his eternal ruin! All the love and politeness that worldly men show to their neighbour, is for the perishing body; while they care not for the soul, but perhaps contribute much to its eternal destruction. But if the love of God be shed abroad in our heart, the salvation of souls will be the first object we have in view; for,

I. We tremble to think of their future misery. We know assuredly that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." Rom. i. 18. We certainly know that all men are born in sin, and are children of wrath; and that without an interest in Christ by faith, and a heart changed by grace, no man shall see the Lord; that "the wrath of God abideth on every unbeliever," and that "he will render indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every man who dies in his sins," impenitent, unpardoned, unrenewed. Now, can we think of our relations, our friends, our neighbours being in this state, without pitying them, praying for them, and exhorting them to "fly from the wrath to come?" It is impossible! If any man can, how dwelleth the love of God in him? When our compassionate Saviour paid his last visit to Jerusalem, and from a hill beheld that great and wicked city, which on account of unbelief, was to be destroyed in about forty years, he wept over it; though then surrounded with a multitude, crying, "Hosanna," he lamented over it with tears, saying, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but

now they are hid from thine eyes." Luke xix. 42. And may not we be permitted, with some small portion of the same love and compassion to our perishing neighbours, to say, O how happy would it be for you now to know those things which are necessary to your present peace and everlasting salvation; lest, ere long, God should deprive you of the means of grace, and give you up to the blindness of your minds and the hardness of your hearts! It would shock us beyond measure to see one of you burning in a great fire, were it but for a few minutes; but who can think without horror of everlasting burnings? We therefore would, as St. Jude speaks, "save you with fear, pulling you out of the fire."

2. As we wish to prevent your future destruction, so likewise we earnestly desire that you may share with us in the joys and glories of the heavenly world. We believe "there is a reward for the righteous;" that "the pure in heart shall see God;" that "in his presence is fulness of joy, and at his right hand there are pleasures for evermore." We believe that Christ is gone to heaven to prepare mansions for his people; and that, in due time, they shall be with him, to behold his glory, to enter into his rest, to sit down with him on his throne, and to wear a crown of glory. We humbly hope, through Jesus, to partake of these blessings, and we would gladly take all the world along with us. We are grieved to think that any should despise the good land, slight the invitations of Heaven, or expect it on false grounds. We are grieved to think that so many cleave to the dust, and for the sake of the short-lived pleasures of sin, and a portion in this world, are in danger of losing eternal joys. This therefore puts us upon urging you to seek first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, that you may also be admitted into the kingdom of glory.

3. We wish you to know and enjoy the present pleasures of true religion. Let strangers to godliness say what they please, we maintain that the ways of wisdom are pleasantness, and her paths are peace. Some of us have tried both, the pleasures of sin and the pleasures of religion; and we are bold to say, there is more satisfaction in one hour's communion with God, than in days and months of sinful indulgence. We can say, with David, "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand; I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than dwell in the tents of wickedness." A good hope through grace, a knowledge of the pardon of our sins, a persuasion of the favour of God towards us, a belief that all things are working together for our good, and that we shall go to heaven when we die; together with the actual delight we find in prayer, praise, hearing, reading, and conversation with the people of God—these are joys that satisfy and sanctify the mind, and compared to which, all the frothy mirth and carnal pleasures of the wicked are mean as the toys of children, and hurtful as the sports of madmen. We wish you therefore, brethren, to be partakers of the grace of God, and we say to you, as Moses to Hobab, "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." Numb. x. 29.

4. We wish the salvation of others *on account of the glory of God*, for which we feel ourselves concerned, and which will be promoted thereby. We are taught to pray, "Hallowed be thy name." Let God be glorified! And surely, when a poor sinner ceases to be a rebel to his Maker, throws himself at the feet of mercy, and swears allegiance to the God of his salvation, the Lord is glorified. Satan loses another subject, and one is added to the kingdom of Jesus. The love of Christ constraineth us, and our loyalty to the King of heaven makes us long to see

his kingdom flourish. We cannot tell of how great importance may be the value of one converted soul; a wife, a husband, the children of the family, the servants, the connexions, may all be the better for it; the gospel may be spread; more souls may be converted, and generations yet unborn may derive benefit from it. We would therefore compass sea and land to make one proselyte, not to our party, or any particular sect, but that Jesus may be exalted: "for blessed be his glorious name for ever, and let the whole earth be filled with his glory! Amen and Amen." Psalm lxxii. 19.

5. To say the truth, we are not without a little selfishness in this matter: for beside all the reasons before mentioned, we have some view to our own peace and happiness. We do find that, "the meanest service of Christ has refreshment in it." Our good Master sends not his servants on a warfare at their own charge. He that watereth the souls of others, shall himself be watered. We think the conversion of a soul to God is the greatest honour and happiness, next to our own salvation, that we can enjoy; and though we know that no man has any claim upon God for what he does, all being unprofitable servants—that the best action of man has no merit in it—yet we believe that there is a reward of grace for the faithful servants of Christ, who has promised that so small a gift as a cup of cold water given to any one, because he belongs to Christ, shall not be forgotten; and as to those whom he employs in his work, "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever." Dan. xii. 3.

Let us now show in what manner a desire for the salvation of sinners ought to be expressed; for this desire, when true, will not be idle, but active; and

will put persons on earnest endeavours to accomplish it; and,

1. *By prayer.* The conversion of a soul, like the creation of the world, is the work of God alone. A real Christian is a new creature, "born not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John i. 13. St. Paul, therefore, in our text, mentions not only his "heart's desire," but "his prayer to God" also. Those who truly pray for themselves will pray for others too. If a husband or a wife has a partner who knows not the Lord, prayer will be immediately offered. If a parent has an ungodly child, like Abraham he will cry, "O that Ishmael might live before thee!" or like the poor man, Matt. xvii. 15. "Lord, have mercy upon my son!" Thus Job rose early in the morning, and offered up ten offerings for his ten children; because he feared they had sinned against God in their feasting with each other.

2. *We should urge our friends to come and hear the gospel.* Do not be ashamed to invite them to hear that word which God has made his power to your salvation. When Christ called Andrew to be his disciple, Andrew soon invited his brother Peter; and the day after, when Christ called Philip, Philip presently findeth Nathaniel, and invites him to come and hear Jesus. So when the Lord sent Peter to preach to Cornelius, a Roman officer, he found Cornelius had called together his kinsmen and friends; and they were all gathered together in a private house, as you may be here, to hear all things which God had commanded Peter to preach. O how many have had reason to bless God for ever, that some kind friend first invited them to go and hear a gospel sermon! Practise this, my friends; all you who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, say to others, "O taste and see that the Lord is good!" Sinners, as you all know, are

very active to bring others into sin, and to invite them to plays and merry-meetings; why should not we be more active to save souls, than sinners are to destroy them?

3. There is another way in which we should show our desire for the salvation of our fellow-creatures, and that is, *by the Christian education of children,* our own and our neighbours'. Abraham was commended of God for this—"I know him, said the Lord, that he will command his children and his household after him;" and parents were ordered, by the law, Deut. vi. 7, "to teach their children the words of God diligently; to talk of them when they sat down in the house, when they walked by the way, when they lay down, and when they rose up." If parents wish well to the souls of their children, they will try to inform their minds, bring them under the word, and restrain them as much as possible from sabbath-breaking and other sins. And as there are some parents who will not, or cannot, instruct their own children, let us do what we can for them. Why should one of these little ones perish, while Sunday Schools may be kept up? The Lord prosper this good work more and more! And to this we may add, constant regard to *family worship,* by those who are at the head of families. Surely they have little regard to the souls of children and servants, who do not daily read the Scriptures, and pray with their families.

4. *Personal exhortation* is a great means of good to the souls of men. "Exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." How often has God blessed one sentence, spoken in his fear and love! A "word spoken in season, how good is it!" O let us try, whenever we can, mildly to reprove sin; and give a hint, on all proper occasions, in companies,

on journeys, at work, whereby we may prove, if the Lord bless it, the instruments of our neighbour's conversion.

5. To all this, one thing more must necessarily be added, and that is, a *holy life*. Actions speak louder than words. "Let our light shine before men, that they, seeing our *good works*," as well as hearing our good words, "may glorify God." There is a testimony for God in the life of a holy man, that the wicked may despise, but cannot resist. Thus let all Christians "hold forth the word of life," that so, even the prejudiced, "who will not hear the word, may, without the word, be won by our conversation."

APPLICATION.

Men and brethren: Is it the duty and practice of all real Christians to be thus affectionately concerned for the salvation of others?—Should you not be much more concerned for your own salvation; you, who have hitherto totally neglected it? O consider the value of your souls! Are you not sinners? And must you not soon receive the wages of your sins, unless they are pardoned for Christ's sake? And can you expect pardon without seeking it? O then be wise. Rouse yourselves from your dreadful stupidity. Cry to God for his mercy and grace, lest you perish. This is the day of salvation. To you is the word of salvation sent. O that it may not be sent in vain! Jesus Christ is a great and gracious Saviour; he was never known to reject one perishing sinner who came to him for life. Let this be an encouragement to you to apply to him, and you will find him able and willing to save to the uttermost.

From what has been said, we may learn the nature of true grace, how it opens the heart, and shows itself in love to God and man. This may afford some

comfort to those who fear they are destitute of it. Ask your hearts whether they do not long for the salvation of your fellow-men?—and whether you do not, with Christ, angels, and all good men, rejoice in their conversion? If so, it is a good evidence of grace. On the contrary, those selfish souls who can be content to go to heaven alone, while they care not if all around them perish; while they make no one effort to rescue them from destruction; such persons have reason to fear; for, if we love not our neighbour whom we have seen, how can we love God whom we have not seen?

Finally, let every serious hearer suffer the word of exhortation. See, in St .Paul, a pattern of holy zeal, and imitate it. Like him, let it be your heart's desire and prayer to God, that Israel may be saved. Look around you, and see who there is to whom you may be useful. Consider by what means you may best advance the glory of the great Redeemer, by bringing souls to him. Remember that life is short, and all opportunities of usefulness will cease. Work, then, while it is day, for the night of death is coming, when no man can work. "Serve your generation according to the will of God," and then enter into the promised rest; where, with all the redeemed, you shall glorify the riches of free grace to all eternity.

The Prodigal Son; or, the Penitent joyfully received.

SERMON XVIII.

LUKE xv. 24.

For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

JESUS CHRIST came into the world to save sinners; he therefore behaved in a kind and affable manner to all, even to some who had been very great sinners. This offended the Jews, and especially the self-righteous Pharisees. They thought that a holy prophet should have nothing to do with such bad people; not considering that he went among them on purpose to save them from their sins. But Jesus Christ vindicates his conduct by appealing to the custom of men in general, who always rejoice when they recover any valuable thing that was lost. To illustrate this, he gives us a most beautiful and affecting parable, in which we have,

I. The prodigal's sin and folly, in departing from his father, and living in a riotous manner.

II. His repentance and return.

III. His kind reception.

IV. The envy of his elder brother upon that occasion.

I. We have the prodigal's sin and folly, v. 11—13. "A certain man had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me: and he divided unto them his living. And, not many days after, the

younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living."

The prodigal son is an emblem of a sinner. He disliked the restraint of his pious father. He wanted to be his own master; to live in a state of independence, and to be governed by his own corrupt judgment. The language of sinners is, "Let us break his bonds asunder, and cast away his cords from us;" they say unto God, "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have if we pray unto him?" Job xxi. 15. All natural men are, like the prodigal, men of the world, and want their portion in this life, regardless of a portion in heaven; and, like him, they wish to live at a distance from God, and, as much as possible, "without God in the world."

But let us stop a moment, and ask whether this is not a picture of ourselves. Has not each of us, more or less, acted the same part? Is there not in us, even in us, an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God? Is not this the reason that so many forsake the house of God, even on the Lord's day—that they dislike to hear God speak to them in his preached word—that they refuse to speak to God in their prayers—and that they despise truly religious persons, who are the family of God? Surely all this arises from hearts "alienated from the life of God;" this is the "carnal mind," which is enmity against him.

Observe, now, how he behaves in the distant country to which he went. Probably he told his father that he would traffic with this money, and so mend his fortune; or, at least, that he would travel for the improvement of his mind; but he no sooner gets this portion into his hands, and becomes his own master, than he enters upon a loose, lewd, riotous way of life,

in the company of bad women and other wicked companions. Thus he *wasted* his substance, and abused the gifts of God; gave himself up to luxury and lasciviousness, "to work all uncleanness with greediness."

See the consequence of being left to ourselves; the misery of departing from God! and O, beware of wasting his gifts! Our reason, our health, our strength, our time, our money, our influence, are all talents committed to our trust: let them be used to promote the glory of God and the salvation of our souls, and not abused to the purposes of sin and destruction.

Mark now, my friends, how certainly misery follows sin. Ver. 14. "When he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want." Here is a proof of the truth of that old proverb—"Wilful waste makes woeful want." See how the pleasures of sense perish in the using: "for as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of a fool:" a noisy blaze succeeded by dismal darkness. Let this, as Solomon advises, keep thee from the evil woman; from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman; for by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread. She hath cast down many wounded. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death." Prov. vi. 24. and vii. 26.

What was become of the prodigal's gay friends? Would none who had feasted at his table come forward to supply his wants? No; they all deserted him. Place no dependence on sinful companions. Many adore the rising sun, who turn their backs upon it when it sets. And how just it is that he who acts as an enemy to God, should not be able to find a friend among men!

One should have thought that now, in his adver-

sity, he would have turned his thoughts homeward. Surely this was a proper time for serious reflection. But he was not sufficiently humbled; rather than go back to his father, he will submit to the most servile state. Ver. 15. "He went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine." It is no disgrace in this country to be a servant, or to feed any sort of cattle; but you are to observe that he was a Jew; and, as swine's flesh was forbidden to the Jews, there could be nothing more odious and abominable to him than the care of swine. It seems too that this gay youth was a poor worthless creature, and, notwithstanding his education, fit for no better employment. O how are the mighty fallen, and how is the fine gentleman degraded!

But far greater is the disgrace of sinful man. Created at first in the image of God; honourable and happy in communion with him; see him now fallen from his high estate, become a servant of sin, yea, a slave of the devil; a companion of beasts; yea, himself, as Bishop Hall speaks, "Half a beast and half a devil!" Whatever sinners may think of themselves, their wretched business is no other than the prodigal's; they are "making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof," and that is no better than feeding greedy, dirty, noisy swine.

Disgraceful as his employment was, could he have got wholesome, though plain, food, he might have made himself content. But to fill up the measure of his misery, we find he was almost starved to death. Having, perhaps, a hard-hearted master, and that in a time of famine, he had not a morsel of bread; he must not only feed the swine, but feed with them, and eat the same food. Ver. 16. "He would fain have filled his belly with the husks which the swine did eat"—wild chesnuts, probably, or some such trash,

not fit for a man to eat; but though he would have been glad of them, he could not get them, or not enough of them to satisfy his hunger.

Here also is a picture of the sinner. Husks are food for swine, not for men; so the things of this world are no more fit to satisfy the immortal soul than husks to feed the body. They suit not our nature, nor satisfy our desires:

> "Why seek ye that which is not bread,
> Nor can your hungry souls sustain?
> On ashes, husks, and air you feed;
> Ye spend your little all in vain."

II. Let us now proceed to a more pleasing part of the subject. "It is a long lane, they say, which has no turning," and yet, alas! thousands go on all their days in the way to eternal ruin! But here we have an instance of a sinner, reduced to the last extremity, to whom his afflictions were sanctified, beginning to repent and return to God. Ver. 17. "And when he came to himself he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!"

"He came to himself"—remarkable expression! He had been *beside himself;* he had acted the part of a madman; and, indeed, "the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart." Eccles. ix. 3. Do madmen mistake their own condition, and fancy themselves kings and emperors? So do poor sinners; they think themselves spiritually "rich, and increased with goods, &c., and know not that they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Madmen are often desperately mischievous, and even self-murderers. So are all sinners. What madness can be equal to the eternal destruction of the soul for the sake of a few momentary pleasures?

Yes; we are all far from ourselves, when we are far from God; and we never return to ourselves till God, in mercy, returns to us. Regard not then the foolish reproach of the world, who will say, when you are truly concerned for your souls, that you are mad. No; *they* are the madmen who live in sin; you, who are coming to God, have come to yourselves.

The prodigal compares his own wretched state with the condition of his father's meanest servants. "I am starving; they are feasting. I am miserable; they are happy." Just so a repenting sinner plainly perceives his own miserable case, and longs to partake of their happiness who live in the house of God, and are his devoted servants. "I perish," said he; so may every man say who lives in sin; "I perish; but there are others (O that I were one of them!) who dwell in the house of the Lord; feast upon his rich grace; know that their sins are pardoned, and are full of peace and joy in believing."

What is the natural consequence of such a comparison? Why, an effort, an immediate effort, to mend his condition. Hope springs up in his heart; and though there was but a may-be, and mere peradventure, of success, he makes the following wise resolution, ver. 18, 19: "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants."

He resolves to return to his father. Now, what is conversion, but the sinner's return to God? This is what God calls us to in his word—"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Isa. lv. 7. But with what spirit will he return? Will he feign an excuse, and go with a lie in his mouth? Will he say, "I have

been very unfortunate; I have been robbed of my property; been deceived by swindlers; or had a shipwreck at sea?" Or will he plead his youth and indiscretion, and say, "Though I have done wrong, I had a *good heart!*" Such, my friends, are the wretched excuses of unhumbled sinners. But the prodigal now perceived the plague of his own heart; he was "poor in spirit;" he would make no excuses, but own his guilt, and confess he was unworthy to be treated as a son; he would be contented and thankful to be admitted into the kitchen or the scullery. "Make me as one of thy hired servants." Thus will it be with every true penitent; he will give glory to God by making full confession of his sin, and will sincerely admit that he is totally unworthy of the grace and mercy of God.

Observe; he says, "I have sinned *against heaven*" —against the God of heaven; against the high authority of God, and against the wonderful goodness of God. It is a foolish and hurtful mistake of some people, when they speak of a drunkard, or some other wicked man, to say, —"he hurts none but himself." It is true sinners hurt themselves; but they also offend and provoke the God of Heaven; and in true repentance, the sinner, like the prodigal, and like the Psalmist, will say, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." *Before thee,* said he; the prodigal had sinned against his father by throwing off his easy yoke; and let young people remember that disobedient and undutiful behaviour to their parents is a sin against God, that needs his pardoning mercy, and must be repented of. Think of this, children.

Shall we pause a moment, and ask ourselves whether we find in *our* hearts a disposition like that of the prodigal? We have all *sinned* with him, but which of us repents with him? Depend upon it, we

shall not think of returning to God, till we feel the misery of departing from him. We have forsaken God, we have set up for our own guides, we have abused the gifts of God, we have been the slaves of sin, and have we not found emptiness, insufficiency, dissatisfaction, misery, and danger, in this condition? If not, may God open our eyes, and help us to discover it? If we are convinced of these things, let us make the prodigal's resolution, "I will arise;" and not only make it, but execute it; for we read, ver. 19, *He arose and came to his father.* There are many good resolutions formed which come to nothing. It has been said that "hell is paved with good resolutions;" perhaps there is not one unhappy creature there who did not at one time or other say, "I will arise and go to my father," but their resolutions died away. The prodigal, however, arose, and began his journey—a long journey—for you will remember that he went into "a far country." Ah! who can tell what painful fears and doubts assaulted his mind on the way? Hunger had brought him very low; and he might have said, "How can these trembling limbs carry me so many miles? I must beg my way; perhaps I may die on the road; and oh, if I live to reach the place, how can I bear the sight of the house? My father, my offended father, will refuse to see me; forbid me the house; and, after all my labour, I may be rejected, and justly too. But, however, though I *may* perish if I go, I *must* perish if I stay. I will arise, and go to my father."—He goes. He continues his journey; and, at length, after many a weary step, and many a toilsome day, he catches a glimpse of the mansion; he halts; his heart beats, and a thousand fears rush into his mind, "Ah! what shall I do? What shall I say?"

Just then, for so Providence ordered it, "when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and

had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him." This is the

IIIrd thing we are to consider; his kind reception. God's eyes are upon all his creatures. "He looketh upon men," to see if there be any that regard, any that return; and the very first motions of the heart towards him are noticed. "He looketh upon men; and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; he will deliver his soul from going down into the pit, and his life shall see the light." Job xxxiii. 28.

He had compassion. A parent can readily conceive what tender feelings would be excited by the sight of a long-lost child returning in this miserable plight; and by these feelings the God of mercy is pleased to express his perfect readiness to receive and forgive a repenting sinner.

He ran. The prodigal, perhaps, stopped short, afraid to venture on; but the father runs; forgetting his age, and the gravity of his character, he runs to meet him, impatient to embrace him.

He fell on his neck, and kissed him; though ragged, though filthy, though lately come from feeding swine. Any other than a father would have loathed; but the parent loves, and manifests his love by his affectionate embraces.

What a wonderful display is this of the love of God! It is thus that God prevents us with the blessings of his goodness. It is thus that repenting sinners are welcomed by the God of mercy. Hear it, O my friends, hear it for your encouragement, that our God is "ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness." Nehem. ix. 17. Hear his own words: Jer. xxxi. 18. "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus: Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; turn thou me, and I shall

be turned, for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh; I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth." This is the language of God's compassion, ver. 20.—"Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him, saith the Lord." Yes, Sirs, God, for Christ's sake, keeps mercy in store for the chief of sinners who return to him.

Now, what effect had this kind behaviour on the prodigal? Did it make him suppress his intended confession? Did it prevent the humiliation he resolved upon? No; it rather increased his contrition and godly sorrow. An awakened sinner is affected and melted down with the discoveries of God's free, full, pardoning love in Christ Jesus, it appears so great, so undeserved, and so excellent.

"Law and terrors do but harden,
All the while they work alone;
But a sense of blood-bought pardon,
Soon dissolves a heart of stone."

The prodigal no sooner meets his father than he cries, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son"—he was going on; he would have said more; but the father stopped him, and *said to his servants*, who with surprise had followed him, and gathered round to behold the affecting scene,—"Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." Ver. 22—24.

The prodigal was half naked; he is now clothed, and that with a robe; the dress of a prince rather than of a servant. He had the appearance of a wretched slave; the ornaments of a free man were put upon him. He was ready to starve; the most delicate food is prepared for him. He was almost overwhelmed with grief; cheerfulness and joy now fill his heart. Thus, the lower a penitent sinks in humility, the higher will God raise him, and heap upon him the greater benefits. The reconciled sinner shall be treated as a child; he shall be clothed with the garments of salvation, with the righteousness of Christ; he shall have the seal of adoption, and the graces of the Spirit enabling him to walk in the ways of God.

We have scarcely time to notice, in the IVth place, the behaviour of his ill-natured elder brother; suffice it to say, it was a picture of the Pharisees; and represents the character of many, "who value themselves on the regularity of their own conduct, and betray a strong aversion to the rich grace of the gospel, which is extended to the greatest sinners; they are offended that no peculiar compliment is paid to their excellence, and that others, whom they despised, are put on a level with them." Thus Christ reproves them.

CONCLUSION.

Men and brethren,—There are two things in this parable which I trust you will not forget—*the folly of sinners,* and *the compassion of God.* Let each one of us consider, whether he has not ungratefully run away from God, disliked his restraints—been wise in his own conceit—indulged forbidden lusts—and abused the bounties of heaven? And yet, perhaps, totally insensible of the evil of such base conduct.

In the midst of prosperity there was not a thought of returning to God; and even in affliction, any other method was tried rather than that. But surely it is high time to bethink ourselves. May divine grace bring us all to ourselves, as the necessary means of bringing us to God. Let us resolve, without a moment's delay, to humble ourselves at his feet; and let us be encouraged to do so by the affecting account we have heard of God's kindness. "He sees afar off the returning sinners; he pities, he meets, he pardons, he embraces them He arrays them with the robe of the Redeemer's righteousness; adorns them with the ornaments of sanctifying grace; honours them with the tokens of adopting love; and invests them with all the privileges of his dear children." O that we may feel the charming force of these heavenly attractions! May there be joy in heaven and earth this day on our account; and may we, thus received into the house of God, abide there all the days of our life, admiring and adoring the sovereign, free, and everlasting grace of God: and saying, "Behold! what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!"

"The mighty God will not despise
The contrite heart for sacrifice;
The deep-fetched sigh, the secret groan,
Rises accepted to the Throne.

"He meets with tokens of his grace,
The trembling lip, the blushing face;
His bowels yearn when sinners pray,
And mercy bears their sins away.

"And now let us, who long have been
The wretched slaves of hell and sin,
Repent—made wiser by the rod—
Come to ourselves, and then to God."

SERMON XIX.

JOHN XIV. 6.

I am the way.

IF we believe that there is a future state of happiness, called heaven, and a future state of misery, called hell, there can be nothing of greater consequence to us, than to obtain the one and escape the other. If we have any serious thoughts of these things, we cannot but enquire, Which is the true way to heaven? Every thing that calls itself *Religion* pretends to be the way; but, as there are so many different ways, they cannot all be right: yea, we are bold to say they are all wrong, except *one*, and that one is declared in the text; "I am the way," said Jesus; "no man cometh to the Father, but by me." Our Lord spake these words to his disciples when they were full of trouble because he was about to leave them. He comforts them by saying he was going to heaven, his Father's house, to prepare a place for them; and that he would come again, and receive them to himself; that where he was they also might be: and then he adds, "Whither I go ye know, and the *way* ye know." But Thomas, who was rather of a doubtful turn of mind, replied—Lord, after all thou hast said, we are still at a loss about the place where thou art going, and how then can we know the way to follow thee? Jesus answered, *I am the way;* which is as if he had said, I am the Mediator between God and Man; I am the means of intercourse between heaven and earth; whatever

comes from God to a sinner, comes through me; and whatever, of an acceptable kind, goes from a sinful man to God, must pass through my hands. In treating upon these very important and useful words, we shall shew—

I. *To what Christ is a way;* and

II. *What sort of a way he is.*

I. We are to consider, *What Christ is a way to.* Every way or road leads from some place to another; now, as he is pleased to call himself *a way,* in condescension to our mean capacities, we are to consider, what he is the way *from,* and what he is the way *to.* We are to remember that we are fallen, guilty, creatures, in a state of sin, and liable to all miseries here and hereafter; and that we are far from God, from righteousness, and from heaven; now, if ever we are brought back to God and a state of grace here, and to a state of glory hereafter, it must be in and through Jesus Christ alone. We say then, that Christ is the *way to God and the way to heaven.*

The first of these is directly expressed by our blessed Lord in the text: *I am the way; no man cometh to the Father, but by me.* When man was first created, he lived in a happy state of nearness to God; he knew God, and delighted in him as his chief good; but sin, cursed sin, soon made a dreadful separation; and now we come into the world "estranged from God," and we "go astray from the womb;" we desire absence from God: "he is not in all our thoughts;" but we seek happiness in sin and folly. Yet is the Lord our God pleased to invite us back to him, by the promises and blessings of his gospel, and by the ordinances of his house. And although multitudes despise these, and madly resolve to pursue the way of destruction, yet a happy few there are, who hear the voice of the Son of God in his word; are made sensible that, being far from him, they must

perish, and that it is good for them to draw nigh to him. But these persons have oftentimes such an awful view of the glorious and dreadful majesty of God, as an infinitely holy and just Being, and of the distance that sin has occasioned, that they know not how to approach him. The prophet Micah thus expresses the anxious desires of such an one, chap. vi. 6. "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul!" Blessed be the Lord, "he hath shewed us what is good." He hath given us a full answer to these enquiries, in our text. Jesus is the way. It is not by costly offerings of blood or oil, nor at the dreadful expense of sacrificing a darling child; but Jesus is the way. He not only came to *shew* us the way, but *to be* the way. He did not come to tell us how we may make our peace with God, as some express themselves, but to be our peace; for "he made peace through the blood of his cross." It is by the death of Jesus that we draw near to God: so St. Peter tells us, "He suffered for our sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." We were far from him; we had neither the will nor the power to return; and sin, if not atoned for, must have made an everlasting separation between a holy God and vile sinners; but Jesus, who was perfectly just and righteous, endured the most shameful and painful sufferings on the cross, for us; that is, in our room and stead, that he might reconcile us to God, and bring us to a holy conformity to him, and happy communion with him here, and to the eternal enjoyment of him hereafter.

In this way, that is, in Jesus, we have free access

to the glorious Majesty of heaven; we may by prayer in his name, "come with boldness to the throne of grace," there to "obtain mercy and find grace to help us." Hear what St. Paul says of this matter, Heb. x. 19, &c. "Having, therefore, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say, his flesh—let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith." What a glorious privilege is this! We may approach the great God, as our reconciled God and Father; we may use holy freedom with him in our prayers: we have this liberty of access by the merit of Christ's blood, and by the application of it to our consciences through faith therein. This is the way prepared for our use, even Jesus, who is "the way, the truth, and the life;" he is the truth and substance of all the ordinances of the Old Testament; with particular reference to the rending of that veil which separated the holy of holies in the temple from the holy place; and which rending took place at the moment of our Saviour's death; which signified that now the way to God and heaven is laid open for all believers; and that is the second thing proposed.

2. *Jesus Christ is the way to heaven.* This indeed follows the other; for if we come to God by Jesus as our reconciled Father; if sin be pardoned, and we are admitted to a life of holy communion with him here, it is certain that we shall also have "an abundant entrance into his heavenly kingdom and glory." Jesus died to "redeem us *to God*," to his favour and image here, and to his glory hereafter. He died to "bring many sons to glory" that they might be satisfied with the goodness of his house, even of his holy temple; that they may be "pillars in that temple, never more to go out;" that they may approach him in a more sublime way of worship than at present,

without the help of means and ordinances; that they may "see him face to face," without a cloud to hide his glory from them, and without the clog of sinful flesh and blood. Now Jesus is the only way to heaven. This is the record of the gospel,—"God hath given to us eternal life, and *this life is in his Son.*" There it is, and no where else; and whoever thinks to get to heaven another way misses the true road, and will be eternally disappointed. There are many ways to hell, but only one to heaven, and if *Jesus* be not our way, we shall never get thither. As sinners we have forfeited heaven, and deserved hell; but Jesus Christ has not only redeemed his people from the curse, that they may not go to hell; but by his perfect obedience or righteousness, he has procured for them a *title to heaven.* The righteousness of Christ is "to and upon all who believe in him;" it is transferred to them, and imputed to them, or reckoned to their account, as if they had themselves performed it; and on this ground it is that they are admitted into the realms of light and glory; "*therefore* are they before the throne, because they have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb;" and not on account of any goodness, virtue, or good works of their own.

Besides this, there is *a fitness for heaven*, a meetness of disposition, and capacity of enjoyment, for that holy state, without which no man can see the Lord: for it is plain that a wicked man, a carnal mind, could not enjoy heaven, were he admitted into it; there must therefore be a change of heart, a love of God and holiness, as well as a title to glory. This also we have from Jesus Christ. We are not pardoned by his blood, and then sanctified by our own endeavours (though these also are to be used), but "Christ is made unto us sanctification." It is by the Spirit of Christ, dwelling and working in us, that we are re-

newed in the spirit of our minds; the love and power of sin mortified; the world, with all its vanities, crucified to us; and we led into a spiritual life of communion with God here, as the preparation and pledge of our eternal happiness in heaven: Thus is Jesus, in every point of view, the way to heaven.

Having briefly shown that Christ is the way to God and heaven, let us stop a moment, and ask ourselves whether we have any desire that he may be *our* way in these respects? Are there not some who are so far from wishing to draw nigh to God, that their hearts and lives plainly say, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways?" You dare not say so in words; but your actions say so. God and sin cannot reign in the same heart; and when you choose sin and indulge it, you do in effect say—"God, begone! I hate your company: I love your enemy; I love sin, and will submit to the devil's rule. I will have nothing to do with you. I hate prayer. I hate the Bible. I hate the saints." This is horrid language, and you dislike the sound of the words; but is not this the fair language of your profane cursing and swearing, of your lust and lewdness, fornication and uncleanness? Is not this the language of your sabbath-breaking, and contempt of religious ordinances and means of grace? When you get drunk, and swear, and lie, or steal, or commit any bad action, do you not say, Depart from me, and let sin and Satan have me? O, my friends, consider what will be the end of these things. You must die, and then appear before God; a holy, a just, and offended God: and should you not inquire, How may I come before him acceptably? Remember, then, that Jesus is the way; and O that you may be made "willing in the day of his power," to come to him for pardon and life! for "he is able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by him."

The same may be said of Christ as the way to *heaven.* Oh! how many care nothing about heaven! And can it be supposed that any man will ever come to heaven, who never thought of it before he came thither? No, indeed. It is "the prize set before us," and the Christian must "so run as to obtain it," and there is no way to run in but Jesus Christ. Most men hope to go to heaven when they die; and yet few consider whether they are in the right way. As Christ only is the way, let any person inquire, when any thing is proposed to him as the way, *Is it Christ?* If men say, Good works are the way; ask, Are good works Christ? If they say, Baptism and the Lord's Supper are the way; ask again, Are these Christ? Is repentance Christ? Are alms Christ? This is a very easy method of coming to the truth. Christ is the way; and therefore whatever is not Christ, is not the way. *He,* then, *only,* being the way, let us,

II. *Shew what sort of a way Christ is.*

I. Christ is a *new* way; so he is called, Heb. x. 22. Not that the way of salvation by Christ is a new invention, for he is "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Adam, Abel, and Abraham, went to heaven in this way; but it is called *new* because there was one before it. The first way, in which it was proposed for man to be happy, was by his own innocence and perfect obedience: and if Adam had not sinned, this would have been his way to heaven: but as soon as he sinned, and fell, and we in him, this way was shut up for ever, so that there never was one soul that got to heaven in the way of works, nor ever will. This way, by grace, came after the other, and instead of it, and is therefore called a new way.

It is called new, because it was *newly made,* when the New Testament was written. Jesus Christ had

lately died to become this way. It is new, because newly and more plainly revealed in gospel times than it was before; and because it will always be new, and never give place to any other.

2. It is a *living* way. This way to heaven was by Christ's *dying:* yet it is called a living way, because all our life springs from his death. Christ is the life of all who live spiritually or eternally. This way is trodden only by such. All who are in this way are alive to God, and what is more, they shall never die. The eternal life of all who are in Christ, and walk in him, is secure; for because he lives they shall live also. No man ever died upon this road. "I am," said Christ, "the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."—The body, indeed, must die, because of sin; though that is more properly called *sleep* in the New Testament, and the body shall be raised in glory; "but the spirit is life, because of righteousness," and shall never perish, but have everlasting life.

3. It is a *plain* way. Some ways are hard to find; have many turnings, and windings, and cross-paths: but this way is easy to be found, and to be kept. The prophet Isaiah, speaking of it, says, "the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." Isa. xxxv. 8. It is an infinite mercy that the things which belong to our peace are not difficult. There are, it is true, deep and difficult things in the Bible; but the grand truths which concern our salvation are perfectly plain and easy. What can be plainer than what is said about our fallen, sinful, helpless state, as sinners?—or about Jesus Christ, as the only all-sufficient Saviour?—or about our duty, as saved sinners, towards God and man? It is a great blessing to poor people that these things are so plain, and that God

by his Spirit makes them so, even to "babes and sucklings;" for "the entrance of his word giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple."

4. It is a *free* way. There are *private* ways that belong to great men, and they are open to few: it would be a trespass for a stranger to be found in them; but this is a *public* way, the King's *highway*. St. Paul says, *it is consecrated*, that is, appointed, dedicated, devoted, to this purpose, and free for the use of all who desire to travel in it. There are no bars or toll-gates, where travellers must pay for permission to enter or proceed; for salvation is "without money and without price." Isa. lv. 1. It is a way prepared on purpose for the use of *sinners*, who are returning to God; and no objections are made to such persons. No worthiness, nor qualifications, nor conditions are required of the traveller; whosoever will, may come and welcome. It is a *free* way.

5. It is a *safe* and *sure* way. It is a firm, solid road, there is no danger of sinking in it, for Christ is the rock of ages. It suffers no alterations by rains and floods, as other ways do; it is passable at all times; there is nothing at any time to hinder our access to God, and progress to heaven. Nor is there any occasion to fear enemies upon it. There are such; but they cannot prevail. "The devil (says one) has been busy upon this road for about five thousand years, but yet never slew one believer; for every traveller is 'kept by the power of God, through faith to salvation.'" So that he may walk on with boldness, and fear no evil: rejoicing to think that every believer that once set his foot in this way, has been enabled to proceed, and not one of them failed of "receiving the end of his faith, even the salvation of his soul."

6. It is a *pleasant* way. The Scripture says, "the ways of wisdom are pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Satan invites men to travel in the ways

of sin, under the notion of their being pleasant; and there certainly are pleasures in sin; but they are for a short season: they are now mingled with bitter pains and pangs of conscience, and they will issue in misery everlasting. But "the ransomed of the Lord," who return to the heavenly Zion, "shall come with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads." Believers are called upon to "rejoice always in the Lord." Those who travel in this way are not only secure from harm, as you have heard, but the Lord has engaged for their supply on the road; he has promised that "they shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of his house, and drink of the river of his pleasure." They shall "sit under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit be sweet to their taste." They shall enjoy the company of the saints as their fellow-travellers, with whom their communion shall be sweet. Yea, the Lord of the way himself has promised to bear them company, and has said, "Fear not, for I am with thee;" and, "I will never leave nor forsake thee."

Lastly, It is the *only* way. Many ways to God and heaven have been proposed by mistaken men, under the influence of the great deceiver, the devil: and it is too commonly supposed that *any way* will do, if a man is but sincere in it. But this cannot be true; for if any way of man's invention might suffice, what occasion was there for Christ to come from heaven, obey the law, and endure the curse, that he might become our way?—for, "if righteousness come by the law," or men can be their own saviours, or partake of the mercy of God without an atonement, all the vast expense of Christ's sufferings and death might have been spared; yea, in that case, "the grace of God is set aside, and Christ is dead in vain." Gal. ii. 21. But Christ crucified is the only way; so St. Peter solemnly declares, Acts iv. 12. "Neither is there salvation

in any other; for there is no other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved." There is salvation in his name; it was procured by him, and he ever lives to bestow it: it is also published by divine authority; it it is given forth in the preached Gospel; but there is no other, *under heaven*, given for that purpose: none given by God's orders; if any others are given, it is by impostors and deceivers. Jesus only is the way to God and heaven. Thus you see that Christ is a *new* way—a *living* way—a *free* way—a *safe* way—a *pleasant* way, and the *only* way.

APPLICATION.

My dear friends, suffer me to remind you that as certainly there is a way to heaven, and Christ is that way, so certainly there is a way to hell, and *sin* is that way; and so surely as the believer in Christ shall arrive at heaven, so surely shall the sinner, going on in his wicked way, get to hell at last. O Sirs, do not despise this! Do not laugh at it! It becomes you to be serious in serious matters. "Now, therefore, thus saith the Lord, *Consider your ways.*" The scripture speaks of a *false* way, a *crooked* way, a *perverse* way, a *wicked* way. Now what is *your* way?—Is it the way of the flesh, the way of the world? Then, give me leave to tell you, "it leadeth to destruction." The Lord's eye is upon you. He knows the way you take; "and the way of the wicked is an abomination to him." Now, it is possible, you may be deceived concerning the way you are in; you may think it safe, while you are in the utmost danger, for *the way of the wicked seduceth them*, Prov. xii. 26; and the Scripture declares, that *there is a way which seemeth right to a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death.* Prov. xiv. 12. Is it not then your wisdom to examine very carefully whether you are in the right way or not?

and, as the heart is very deceitful, let me recommend it to you to pray for the Lord's help, lest, after all, you should be deceived. Let me advise you to use that prayer with the Psalmist—*Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

Listen to the voice from heaven, which says—*Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.* Pray that God would teach you *his* way, and convert you from the error of *your own* ways, and for this purpose read and hear the word of God; and O that he may direct your feet into the way of peace!

Is Christ the way to God?—then, believers, make daily use of him as such. Come boldly to the throne of grace. This is a way consecrated for you, and free for your use. Remember, he is a living way. Live upon him, and live to him. Remember, he is a sure way, you may walk with confidence in it, without fear of miscarrying: "He is faithful who hath promised." Christ hath engaged to keep his sheep, and that none shall pluck them out of his hand; and "if God be for us, who can be against us."

Is Christ the way to heaven, and are any of you in him?—look forward with joyful hope of the glory of God. Bless him for bringing you out of the paths of destruction, and leading you into the way of peace. Love Jesus, for becoming your way, at such an expense to himself! and be concerned to walk even as he walked. Thus shall you recommend this way to others, and constrain them to say, "We will go with you, for God is with you of a truth."

SERMON XX.

JOHN VI. 37.

Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

TWO things are necessary to encourage a convinced sinner to come to Christ for salvation: the one is, a persuasion of his *ability* to save; the other, of his *willingness*. Of his ability few comparatively doubt; and who can doubt at all, if he believe that Christ is the great Creator of the world? for "is any thing too hard for the Lord?" Nor is there the least reason to doubt of his good-will to save. And yet how many are distressed with fear on this account! There are few who say, "If thou *canst* do any thing, help us!" But there are many who cry—"Lord, if thou *wilt*, thou canst make me clean." Happy the soul that comes thus far. Jesus will answer, as he did of old,—"*I will*, Be thou clean." This assurance he gives us in many parts of the Scripture, but in none so fully as in the text. Our Lord is here speaking to a multitude of the Jews, who, having seen the miracle of feeding five thousand people with five loaves, followed him a great way, in hope of seeing such another miracle, and perhaps of living upon his bounty. But he exhorts them to seek the bread of life for their souls; laments their unbelief; but comforts himself in this, that all who were given him by the Father should certainly come to him; and declares his perfect readiness to receive every coming soul. This, my friends, is indeed good

news; glad tidings of great joy to those of you who are seeking salvation, and who know that it is to be had only in Jesus; especially if your fearful hearts have been tempted to think he will not receive you. Be no longer faithless, but believing; he says, that if you come, he will in no wise cast you out—he will on no account whatever reject or refuse you, but readily embrace you in the arms of his mercy, and give you pardon, peace, holiness, and heaven. Now, that we may clearly understand this, and get the full comfort of it, let us consider,

I. What is meant by *coming to Christ;* and,

II. The encouragement held out in the text to all comers.

I. What is meant by *coming to Christ.* None can suppose it is coming to him with our bodies: this is now impossible; for the heavens have received him out of our sight; and, though his divine presence is everywhere, his glorified body is only in heaven. And were he on earth, as he once was, coming to him with our bodies only would be of no use, as appears from this chapter, ver. 36, where he says to the people who were round about him, "Ye also have seen me, and believed not." Nor is it merely coming to his house, where he is preached; nor to his table, where he is set forth. Many do all these, who are none the nearer to Christ. Ezek. xxxiii. 31. But this coming is to be understood spiritually; it is the coming of the heart; it is the motion of the mind; it is "the flight of the soul to Christ." It is, therefore, the same as *believing in Christ;* see verse 35. "And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that *cometh to me* shall never hunger; and he that *believeth on me* shall never thirst;" the same person is intended, and the same act of the mind.

But you will observe, that such a comer to Christ is convinced of his sin and danger, and comes to

Christ for help; just as it is said by the prophet Isaiah, (xxvii. 13.) "The great trumpet shall be blown, and *they shall come which were ready to perish.*" No man will go and beg for bread till he is pinched with want. The prodigal son never said, "I will arise and go to my father," till he was ready to perish with hunger. It is a sense of sin, and a fear of hell, together with a hope of mercy, that puts a man upon coming to Christ: for he himself declares, when speaking to the Jews, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." *Life*, you see, is what a sinner must come for; the life of his soul: for he now sees that he is exposed by sin to eternal death. Now, "All that a man hath will he give for his life." When this is in danger, he will be in earnest; he will be in haste; and the language of the coming sinner is—"What shall I do to be saved?"—"Lord, save, or I perish!"

This coming of the soul to Christ supposes faith. No man can come to him till he has heard of him; and no man can hear of him but by the gospel. Now, the Gospel means good news—glad tidings. The Gospel tells us that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners;" that "he is come to seek and to save that which is lost;" that "his blood cleanseth from all sin." The Gospel also calls and invites poor sinners to apply to Jesus, that they may have life. For instance, Jesus says, Matt. xi. 28, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Now the sinner hears these gracious words. The Holy Spirit gives him light to understand them. He mixes faith with them. He believes them to be true. Now he cannot believe these things without being affected by them; without having a desire to be interested in them. If he is persuaded of the freeness, fulness, and suitableness of the salvation that is in Christ, his thoughts must and will be much engaged about it; his affections will be moved;

in other words, he comes to Christ, his mind flies *to* him for refuge, and there it rests.

Now this application of the soul to Jesus has a respect to the various offices and characters which he sustains for our salvation. For instance:—Is he called a *Saviour?* (that is, a deliverer:) the soul desires and hopes for deliverance from sin and hell by him alone. Is he a *Prophet?* the soul, sensible of its woeful ignorance, comes to him with a humble, teachable spirit, to be taught and made wise to salvation. Is he a *Physician?* the convinced sinner, sick to death of sin, eagerly applies to him for health and cure. Is he a *Priest?* the sinner, longing for pardoning mercy, depends alone upon the merit of his sacrifice. Is he a *King?* the soul, heartily weary of Satan's tyranny, willingly submits to his mild government, and relies on his heavenly protection. In a word, he "receives Christ Jesus the Lord," as offered to him in the Gospel.

Here let us stop a moment, and put a question. We have been told what believing is; what coming to Christ is; now, my friends, the question is, *Do we thus come to Christ?* He that cometh shall be saved; but he that cometh not shall not be saved. O let us not neglect this great concern! "How shall we escape if we neglect this great salvation?" Think of a dying hour. Think of the judgment day. And O! how dreadful would it be if Christ should say to any one of us, "Wretched creature, ruined sinner, your destruction lies at your own door! You were told of your danger; you were invited to believe in me; you were assured that, if you came to me, I would save you; but you refused; you would not come to me, that you might have life. Perish, therefore. Perish without pity. Perish without remedy!" God forbid that we should hear such dreadful words!—rather let us, one and all, this very moment, fly, in the wishes

and desires of our hearts, to this compassionate Friend of sinners.

But perhaps there are some here who earnestly desire to be saved, yet their hearts are full of fear, lest they should be rejected. They have such a sight of the greatness of their sins—of their ignorance—of their unworthiness—of the wickedness of their hearts, that they are afraid to come, lest the Lord should cast them out. This is a very common case. You must not think that scarcely any one feels and fears as you do. Were you to talk with serious persons in general, you would find that almost all of them, especially at first, have had the very same fears, and have been so much distressed at times, that they were almost in despair. Jesus Christ knew before-hand that it would be thus; and he therefore graciously spoke these kind encouraging words on purpose to comfort poor, doubting, trembling, coming sinners—"Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." That we may take the comfort of these precious words, let us,

II. Consider the encouragement held out in the text to *all comers*: I say, to *all comers*—"him that cometh;" let him be who he may; high or low; rich or poor; young or old; learned or ignorant; yea, even great sinners; the chief of sinners: all who come shall be welcome. Great sinners need great encouragement; and here they have it. What words could have been spoken more consoling to the distressed sinner? Many are afraid that there is something *peculiar* in their case; something on account of which they shall certainly be cast out: but our gracious Lord, who well knew what timid creatures his people would be, has provided in these words an effectual antidote to their fears. This word, *Him*, takes in all sorts of persons, in all ages and places: all sorts of sinners, even the greatest: it includes liars, drunkards, harlots,

thieves, murderers, and all other kinds and degrees of sinners whomsoever. If any doubt of the truth of this, let them turn to the following texts: Isa. i. 18. Matt. xii. 31. Matt. xxi. 31. Mark xvi. 15, 16. Acts xiii. 39. Only let them come, they shall be received; no difficulties made; no objections started: whatever they have been, whatever they have done, they shall not be cast out. Nay, more, Jesus says, "I will *in no wise* cast him out." I will not by any means, or on any account whatsoever, cast him out; though he may deserve it; though he may dread it; let him take my word for it, I will receive and embrace him; I will show him all the mercy he needs, for pardon, peace, and holiness: I will save him for ever. Such is the import of these most gracious words. And this might be enough, were it not that sinners who are coming to Christ are commonly fruitful in fears and objections, and can scarcely be persuaded of this truth: it seems too great and too good to be true, at least as applied to them, who see their unworthiness and feel their guilt. For the greater satisfaction, then, of such trembling souls, let us attend to a few considerations, from which it will appear that Jesus Christ will heartily welcome every coming sinner.

1. Consider the gracious nature, the kind disposition of Christ towards sinners. "God is love." Jesus is love incarnate. He is the God of love in human nature. "His heart is made of tenderness, his bowels melt with love." We are to remember that he is the brother of our nature. Because we are flesh and blood, he became such, that he might be a merciful High Priest, and through death abolish death. Heb. ii. 14, 17. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich." 2 Cor. viii. 9. Had he not loved sinners, he had never forsaken the throne of glory; condescended to

be born of a poor virgin; to be laid in a manger; to be always a man of sorrows, labours, and sufferings; to endure the contradiction of sinners against himself, and, after all, to be betrayed, falsely accused, scourged, smitten, spit upon, crowned with thorns, and nailed to a cross. Who, that considers this, can doubt whether Jesus loves sinners?

The names of Christ, both in the Old and New Testament, point out his gracious nature. Simeon waited for the *Consolation of Israel.* Now if Jesus had not a gracious heart, his appearance in the world would have been no consolation to sinful men. The prophet Isaiah says, "He shall feed his flock like a *Shepherd*: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." Jesus is the good and gracious Shepherd, who even laid down his life for the sheep; who feeds them in his pleasant pastures, and guards them with his almighty hand. He is the tender and skilful *Physician*, who heals the sick, disordered, and dying soul; who never refuses a patient, nor fails in the most desperate case. He is the *Good Samaritan*, who pities and helps the wounded and dying traveller, neglected and forsaken of men. He is the *Husband* of his church, a name that implies tender care and kind affection; and whose love is the pattern for mortals to imitate. In short he is, as his enemies reproachfully said, *the Friend of Sinners;* not of *sin*, as they pretended, but that best of friends, who "delivers us from our sins."

2. Consider *the office of Christ*, as another argument to prove his readiness to receive a coming sinner. Jesus Christ, as touching his Godhead, is equal with the Father; but he condescended to become a servant for our salvation. As such he often speaks of being "sent;" and of doing "not his own will, but the will of his Father." And what is the will

of the Father, think you? "*This*," saith Jesus, "*is the Father's will, which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing; but that every one who seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life.*" John vi. 39, 40. Jesus Christ is "the *Apostle* and *High Priest* of our profession." The high priest was an officer of the Jewish church, whose business it was to offer gifts and sacrifices; it was necessary for him to be tender-hearted to the ignorant and those who were out of the way, and to be faithful to God and man. Thus Jesus, our great High Priest, is compassionate; "is touched with the feeling of our infirmities; was tempted in all points like as we are; and, being made perfect through sufferings, became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." Heb. iv. 15. v. 9. Now it is the office and business of Jesus Christ to save sinners. The high priest of old had nothing to do but with sinners. It was an office on purpose for sinners: and this was the only errand of Christ to our world. He came not to condemn the world: he declined any thing of that sort; as you may remember respecting the woman taken in adultery, he would not condemn her, John viii. 11; he abhorred her sin, but it was not his office to condemn; he came only to save. And as to proud self-righteous people, he had nothing to do with them; for "he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Look, then, upon Jesus as a public officer, appointed by divine authority to dispense mercy and pardon to every coming sinner; to every one who comes to God for mercy through him. As it is the duty of a judge to dispense the laws, and do justice between man and man; as it is the duty of the physician of an hospital to take care of all the sick who are in it; so it is the gracious office of the Lord Jesus to dispense mercy, pardon, grace, life, and salvation to all who apply to him; and were

it possible, we speak it with the deepest reverence, were it possible, which it is not, that the blessed Jesus should refuse and reject one sinner who comes to him for life, he would be unfaithful; but this can never be, we have his word for it in the text, "I will in no wise cast out him that cometh."

3. Consider, once more, the gracious conduct and behaviour of our Saviour when he was upon earth. "He went about doing good." And who were the objects of his regard? Were they the princes and rulers, the rich and prosperous, the wise and learned? No. These, in general, despised and rejected him. He turned his attention to the poor and needy, the sick and miserable; yea, to publicans and harlots, that he might reclaim and save them. This was his reproach—"a friend of sinners." Did he see a multitude of ignorant people following him for instruction? How did he exert himself in teaching them; in houses, in synagogues, in the temple, in a ship, on a mountain! How plainly, how sweetly, how forcibly did he lead them into divine knowledge! Nor did he forget their bodies. Were they hungry and ready to faint? He had compassion on them, and wrought miracles to supply them with food. See also what vast numbers of diseased persons apply to him; the blind, the deaf, the dumb; the diseased with fever, leprosy, palsy, and others possessed by the devil; he heals them all. You never read of one poor, sick, miserable creature that he rejected; if they came they were welcome; he never sent them away disappointed; and do you think he will show less pity to the sorrows of the mind, to the diseases of the soul? Surely not; for the salvation of one soul is of more consequence than all the hundreds of bodily cures he wrought upon earth. Every man and woman that Christ healed died at last; but he whom Jesus saves "shall never die, but have everlasting life." And yet this, great as it is, is

as easy to him as to say to a leper, "Be thou clean." Come but to him, fellow-sinner, and he will directly say, "Be thou saved."

Remember, too, what a kind attention Jesus paid to mourning sinners. Remember the penitent harlot in the Pharisee's house: she came behind him, and washed his feet with penitential tears; she was despised by the Pharisee because she had been a great sinner, but Christ speaks kindly to her, and says, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." Remember what he said to another great sinner, the Samaritan woman at the well of Sychar—"If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." John iv. 10.—If you knew the worth of salvation, and would ask it of Christ, you should have it; and he says the very same to us: "If you knew the value of my salvation—felt your need of it, and would apply to me for it, you should not be denied." Remember, my friends, how Jesus mourned and wept when hardened sinners were about to perish in their unbelief; remember how he wept to think of Jerusalem's approaching destruction. Remember, too, how he rejoiced at the prospect of a sinner's salvation; though he was a man of sorrows, this filled him with joy: and can you doubt, after all this, whether Jesus will receive you or not? O be not faithless, but believing! Stagger not at this precious promise through unbelief; but be strong in faith, glorifying God.

APPLICATION.

From what has been said, we may learn what an important thing it is to come to Christ. We are all by nature at a dreadful distance; and "they that are far from him," if they die so, "must perish." This then is the first and chief thing in religion, to come to

Christ; that is, so to believe the gospel, as to apply in heart and mind to him for salvation. It is not enough to come to church, or come to chapel, or come to sacrament; all is in vain, if we do not come to Christ; for salvation is to be had of none but Christ, and not even of him without coming to him for it.

Come then, you who never came before. You shall have heaven if you come; hell must be your portion if you do not come. Pray to God to draw you. "Draw me," says the church, "we will run after thee." Come quickly. You may be less disposed to come to-morrow; yea, to-morrow itself may never come to you. Consider the encouragement that these words of Christ afford; "Come to me," said Jesus, "for I am meek and lowly of heart." You need not be afraid to come, for he says, and you may believe him, "he will in no wise cast you out." Make no excuses. Say not, I am ignorant—Come to him, and he will teach you. Say not, I have a hard heart—Come to him, and he will soften it. Say not, I have a corrupt heart—Come to him, and he will sanctify it. Say not, I am a great sinner—this is the very reason why you should come. "This man receiveth sinners;" he came on purpose to save them, and bids you come that he may save you. Think not foolishly first to mend yourselves, and then come to him; you will never be better till you do come.

And you who have come—adore the grace that inclined you to come; that made you willing in the day of God's gracious power, and that made you welcome in the day of his wonderful mercy.

> "'Twas the same love that spread the feast,
> That sweetly forc'd us in;
> Else we had still refus'd to taste,
> And perish'd in our sin."

What hath God wrought? Is it not good to draw

near to God? Have you not tasted that the Lord is gracious? "God hath strewed all the way from the gate of hell, where thou wast, to the gate of heaven, whither thou art going, with flowers out of his own garden. Behold how the promises, invitations, calls, and encouragements of the Gospel lie round about thee." O keep near to thy Saviour; there is safety, there is peace.

This also affords to every believer a sure mark of his election. Do you sometimes fear whether your name is written in heaven; whether you are among his elect? Behold the certain proof: "All that the Father hath given me *shall come* to me." Have you come to Christ? Well, then, this is the proof of your being one of those who were given to him. Thus make "your calling and election sure;" your election by your calling.

Finally; let those who have come to Christ by faith, rejoice to think, that in the heavenly world they shall come to him in a superior manner. Our coming to him now, by faith, affords a certain pledge of our coming into his immediate presence, where there is fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore. "I will," saith he to the Father, "that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory."—"Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face." Faith shall be changed into sight, and hope into possession. "So shall we be for ever with the Lord."

SERMON XXI.

LUKE XIV. 18.

And they all, with one consent, began to make excuse.

THE blessings of the Gospel of Christ are, in the parable of which the text is a part, fitly compared to the dainties of a noble and costly feast. "A certain man made a great supper, and bade many," ver. 16. So Christ has made plentiful provision in his Gospel for the souls of men, and freely invites all who hear it to be partakers. "And he sent his servants at supper-time, to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready," ver. 17. So Christ, having called the *Jews* by his own ministry, sent the apostles after his resurrection to renew the invitation, and to say that the work of redemption was finished, and that he was willing to receive all who should come by faith to him: and this is the language of the Gospel wherever it is preached.

If we consider the nature of a feast, we shall see how properly our Saviour compares the blessings of our salvation to it. In a feast we expect *wholesome provision—plenty—variety—elegance—company, and the* whole *gratis.* All these, and more, Jesus gives us in his Gospel. Here is "*the bread of life* which came down from heaven," without which we must for ever perish: but eating which secures our eternal life. Here is *plenty;* for, in our Father's house, there is bread enough and to spare; and, however numerous the guests who come, still "there is room." Here is

variety; pardon, peace, holiness, adoption, joy in the Holy Ghost, communion with God, perseverance to the end, and glory to crown the whole. Here is *elegance;* dainties worthy of God to bestow; dainties fetched from heaven; dainties purchased at a cost beyond the value of a thousand worlds—for "Christ's flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed!" Here is *good company:* for, sitting down at the gospel feast, "we come to an innumerable company of angels! to the general assembly and church of the first-born: and to God the Judge of all; and to the spirits of just men made perfect; and to Jesus." And, what is best of all, the whole is *gratis*—"without money, and without price."—"The poorer the wretch, the welcomer here."

Now, if these great and glorious blessings are duly considered, how necessary, how free, how precious and delightful they are, one would naturally suppose that all men to whom the Gospel offers them, would as readily and joyfully receive them, as they usually accept an invitation to a plentiful and agreeable entertainment. But alas, it is not so! If we examine the word, or look into the world, we shall find it quite otherwise:—"They all, with one consent, began to make excuse;" for all men, till changed by the grace of God, are blind, and lame, and deaf, and dead, as to all spiritual things; seduced by the devil's lies, and in love with the world, they vainly strive "to fill their belly with the husks which the swine do eat;" but have no more relish for salvation than a sick man for wholesome food: yea, like him, "their soul loatheth dainty meat."

Yet amidst this awful depravity, let it be observed, to the honour of Scripture, and the truths of God, that men are ashamed to give a direct refusal; for conscience admits the value of the Gospel, and therefore, to make their neglect of it somewhat plausible, they

have recourse to various excuses, with which they strive to satisfy themselves and their neighbours, and vainly hope to satisfy God. To describe these excuses, and to answer them; to show what they are, and the folly of them, is the business, which, with the Lord's assistance, I shall now attempt; and, oh, that the Spirit of our God may succeed what shall be said to the conviction of those excusers, and sweeping away all their "refuges of lies!"

We shall first notice the three excuses which follow our text; and then proceed to mention other excuses and objections which are often made.

1. *The first said—I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it; I pray thee have me excused.*

This is the plea of a *rich* man, who had been adding field to field. He was under no kind of necessity to view the land he had bought: probably he had seen it before he had bought it: if not, he might have staid till another day, and have found the field in the same condition; but he wanted to feast his eyes upon his new purchase. See here an instance of the inordinate love of the world, the pride of possession, the deceitfulness of richness. This was "a man of the world, whose portion was in this life," for the sake of which he was deaf to the call of Christ. Oh, how hardly shall they who are rich enter into the kingdom of heaven! so great is the danger of loving the world too much.

2. *And another said—I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused.* Here is the man of *business:* the former was taken up with pleasure; this with care. "Too much leisure, or too much business, are equally dangerous to the soul." This was a frivolous excuse, like the former; another day would have done as well for proving oxen in the plough, for the purchase was already made; but anxiety for the world prevailed over

his spiritual interests. And what is this but the common excuse of tradesmen, labourers, and women who have families? *I have no time to spare for religion!* Let me ask you, What is your time for? Is not the care of the soul *the one thing needful?* Should you not seek *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness? Besides, "What will it profit, if you gain the whole world, and lose your own soul?" And let me tell you there is time enough to mind the affairs of both worlds; and both are best minded together: the one need not shut out the other. Religion will not make men idle; it will make an idle man industrious; it tends even to worldly prosperity. "Godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of this life, and of that which is to come."

How can any man say he has no time for religion, when the Sabbath-day is appointed for that very purpose? Yet that holy day is profaned by many, by business, idleness, or taking pleasure. There are fifty-two days in every year which ought to be wholly employed in public or private duties of religion. What account will they give to God of their time, who have squandered away their precious hours in sin and folly, and who have turned their backs on the means of grace, which might have made them wise to salvation?

Permit me also to observe, that some who cannot find time to serve God, can find time to sin: they can find time to curse and swear; to talk and sing obscenely; to be drunken, and to be wanton. Yea, some of these people complain of too much time, and therefore they invent amusements to *kill time.* Oh, if the hours that some consume at the alehouse, the fairs, the merry-meetings, were spent in hearing and reading the word of God, in prayer, and singing his praises, to how much better account would they turn out!

3. The excuse of a third person was, *I have mar-*

ried a wife, and therefore I cannot come. Here is an excuse of another kind, which takes in too great a regard to creatures, too much fondness for domestic enjoyments, and the pleasures of this life. It was a very weak excuse; for, though he had married a wife, he might surely have left her for a few hours, without a breach of proper affection; or he might have taken her with him to such a great feast as this, where so many were bidden, and none forbidden; or he might have gone alone, if he could not persuade her to go with him. How many perish by the unlawful use of lawful things, and undue regard to carnal relations! Husbands and wives, who ought to help each other in the great concerns of salvation, are often deadly hindrances; and will reproach each other to all eternity for being such. Thus, Adam ruined himself and all his posterity by carnal fondness, and loving the creature more than the Creator. Let married persons be on their guard; and remember, that not only houses and lands, but wives too, must sometimes be forsaken, rather than for their sakes we should forsake Christ.

All these excuses were, as you see, frivolous and foolish; they were all of a worldly kind: and indeed it is *the world*, in some form or other, that proves the great hindrance of man's salvation. But there are many other excuses which people are apt to make, equally absurd. I shall proceed to notice some of them.

4. *Religion*, says one, *is a hard and difficult thing; hard to understand, and difficult to practice.* I answer, *It is necessary.* Christ says, it is *the one thing needful.* It is just as necessary as salvation is. And do you object to every thing necessary, because it is difficult? Do not you find hardships in your trade or business? and yet you pursue it. Consider also, it will be much harder to bear the torments of hell, than to practise the duties of religion. A person

who wanted one of the martyrs to recant, said "Life is sweet, and death is bitter."—"True," said he, "but eternal life is sweeter, and eternal death is more bitter." Will not heaven make amends for all our pains and labours? Do you think there is a saint in heaven that repents of what he did or suffered for Christ? But, in fact, true religion is not so difficult as you may imagine: the path is so plain, that "the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein:" and Jesus says, "Take my yoke upon you, for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light;" his commands are not grievous, and grace makes them pleasant. Religion is far from being a gloomy business. "Wisdom's ways are pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Can it make a man unhappy to love God, and be loved by him? Is it a gloomy thing to be at peace with God, to know that our sins are pardoned, and to have the earnest of glory? There are joys in religion far beyond any that the world can pretend to, and such as wicked men would be glad to possess when they come to lie on a dying bed: then is the value of true religion known, when the world can afford no further help.

5. Some object, and say, *Your religious people are hypocrites: after all their pretences, they are like other folks.* I answer by a question — Are they *all* hypocrites? If so, then there is no such thing as religion in the world; if so, the Bible is all a lie, and Christ must have shed his blood in vain: for he died to redeem us from the world, and our vain conversation in it, and to make us a holy people, zealous of good works. It is admitted that there are some hypocrites; and woe be to them! There was a hypocrite, a Judas, even among the apostles; but religion did not cease because of him! If there were not a reality and an excellency in religion, there would be

no hypocrites: if guineas and bank-notes were not valuable, there would be no counterfeits; and, I presume, you do not refuse to take any money, because there is base coin; nor would you excuse yourself from paying your rent to your landlord, because you are afraid of paying bad money. If there are hypocrites, as you say, and we allow, then there is the greater need to look to yourself, that you are sincere; but I greatly doubt the sincerity of those who make this excuse: and their hearts tell them it will not be admitted at the bar of God. Besides, it is censorious and wicked to judge another man, and to call him a hypocrite, unless his life is bad; but, because you can find no blemish in the life of a truly religious person, you presume to search his heart, and call him a hypocrite. The truth is, you would be glad to prove him such, as an excuse for your own want of religion.

6. Methinks I hear another person say—*I see no occasion to make so much ado about religion.* You say truly; *you* do not see: but your not seeing is a proof of nothing but your own blindness; a blind man sees nothing. If you examine the word of God, you will find the Christian life compared to a warfare; now a soldier's life, in the time of actual service, is not idle. It is also compared to a race, in which great exertion and activity are necessary, if a man would so run as to obtain the prize. A Christian is represented in Scripture as "crucifying the old man of sin," and "mortifying the deeds of the flesh: and can these things be done by the slothful man, who is a stranger to zeal himself, and hates to see it in another? Has not God required you to love him with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your mind, and all your strength; and do you know any body that does more than this? Let me also ask you, Why it is that you commend industry

in worldly business, and despise it in religion? If there be a hell to avoid, and a heaven to obtain, and sin to destroy, and a God to serve, and a soul to save—why should we not be as earnest in religion as you are in the world? Why should not a Christian love God as much as you love money, or sin? I know the answer your heart makes.

7. Another cries—*I shall do as well as my neighbour; and, if I perish, God help thousands!* I reply, If you do not better than the thousands that perish, God help you! Jesus Christ has said, "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat;" while the narrow way to life is found and trodden by few. Think not well of your state, because you are like others: you have greater cause to suspect it. Christ's flock is small; but the devil's herd is large. "The whole world," says St. John, "lieth in wickedness." Follow not, then, the multitude to do evil; but consider their end, and be wise. It is a very affecting and useful story that Mr. Baxter relates, in his "Call to the Unconverted,"—"I remember," says he, "a circumstance that a gentleman told me he saw upon Atchan Bridge, over the Severn, near Shrewsbury. A man was driving a flock of fat lambs; and, something meeting them, and hindering their passage, one of the lambs leaped on the wall of the bridge, and his legs slipping from under him, he fell into the stream; the rest, seeing him, did, one after one, leap over the bridge into the stream, and were all, or almost all, drowned. Those that were behind did little know what was become of them that were gone before, but thought they might venture to follow, their companions; but, as soon as ever they were over the wall, and, falling headlong, the case was altered. Even so it is with unconverted carnal men. One dieth by them, and drops into hell, and another

follows the same way; and yet they will go after them, because they think not whither they are gone! Oh, but when death hath once opened their eyes, and they see what is on the other side of the wall, even in another world, then what would they give to be where they were!"

8. Another objector says—*But I do hope to do better than many, for I am not so bad a sinner as some.* I answer, You are not to compare yourself with others, but with the law of God, which requires perfect obedience. Now, compared with this, you will be found a sinner; and it is not being a less sinner than another that will save you; but faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose righteousness is "to and upon all that believe in him." Besides, the folly of such an excuse is manifest; for, if finding another man worse than one's self would do, then all sinners might escape except that one who is the worst of all.

9. Perhaps another person will say—*It is true, I am a sinner, bad enough; but I do some good things, and will not they atone for my sins?* St. Paul shall answer; "Without shedding of blood there is no remission;" the good works of men were never appointed to the office of a Saviour; for, if "righteousness come by the law, Christ is dead in vain." Why do we call Jesus a *Saviour*, and yet hope to be saved by our works? which is to become our *own* Saviour. But the word of God has settled this, and declares, Eph. ii. 8. "By grace are we saved, through faith; and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." And, to say the truth, no man can do works good in the sight of God until he is first justified by faith; for even "the prayer of the wicked is an abomination to Him." And the thirteenth Article of the Church of England truly says, that "Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God; and we doubt not but they have the nature of sin."

10. Unwilling to humble himself, and cry for mercy, another says—*I am no scholar, and God expects no more than he gives.* I answer, You may be a true Christian, and yet no scholar. God has sent you his word, and you can *hear* it, if you cannot read it: not to say, that since Sunday schools have been set up, every person almost may learn to read if he will. But know this, my friends, that ignorance will excuse none who have the means of instruction. Where knowledge is a duty, ignorance is a sin. It is not your want of opportunity to know the Gospel, but your want of inclination to it, that keeps you ignorant. You take pains to know how you may get food and raiment, or charity; why then remain contentedly ignorant of "the things which belong to your everlasting peace?" Isa. xxvii. 11. 2 Thes. i. 8.

11. Another person, advanced in years, says—*I am too old to change my religion.* What do you call religion? Is it a set of notions and ceremonies? Is it an attachment to certain ministers and buildings? This is not religion. Religion is the devotedness of the heart to God; and without this, the most pompous forms are of no avail. Nicodemus was an old man when he came to Christ, who said to him as we say to you, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." In a word, if your religion has not changed you, it is high time to change your religion.

12. Methinks I hear another say—*I intend to be better at some future time.* So did Felix who trembled when Paul preached; and said to him, "When I have a convenient season, I will call for thee:" but that season never came. Hell is paved with good intentions. Should you die in your sins, which God forbid! out of your own mouth will you be condemned; for you are forced to admit that all is not right; and yet you venture to go on in sin, though you know not what a day may bring forth. Go to the sick and dying bed of a neighbour, and hear him groan and complain of an ach-

ing head and a sick stomach: observe his shaking hand and disordered pulse; the rattling throat, the convulsed limbs, and the cold sweat; and say, Is this a time for repentance? Are these poor dregs of life all you should offer to God? Oh, be wiser; nor leave the service of God, or the salvation of your soul, to so improper a season!

But, after all, the true reason remains untold.—May not all your excuses be summed up in this one?—*I love sin and cannot part with it!* but observe, you must part with sin, or part with heaven. You must turn or burn. And are you content to enjoy the present pleasures of sin for a moment, and endure everlasting pains, which are their certain consequence? I have read of a man, who, by his excesses, was in danger of losing his sight; and being told by the physician that he must change his course or lose his sight, replied, "Then farewell, dear light!" Thus many, by persisting in sin, seem to say,—Farewell, God of mercy, Saviour of sinners, Spirit of holiness! Farewell, ye people of God! Farewell life and happiness, heaven and glory! And, for the sake of dear sin, welcome devils, welcome darkness, despair, and misery, for evermore!

APPLICATION.

Thus, Sirs, we have taken notice of some of those excuses which sinners often make, who love darkness rather than light; who follow lying vanities, and forsake their own mercies. But it is plain that all these excuses arise from the darkness, worldliness, and enmity of our fallen nature, and they show the necessity of having "a new heart and a right spirit." These excuses will scarcely now satisfy those who make them; they will miserably fail them in the prospect of death; and they cannot be accepted at the bar of God. In this parable before us, it is said, that "when the servant shewed his Lord these things, *he was angry*, and

said, *None of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.*" God will resent, with infinite wrath, the contempt which worldly men put on his infinite mercy. So, when provoked by the unbelief of the Jews in the wilderness, he sware in his wrath, that they should not enter into his rest. God forbid that sentence should go forth against any person here. As yet our gracious Lord commands us to "go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that his house may be filled." In his name we come, and call you to the Gospel-feast. Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade you; and knowing the bounty of the Lord, we invite you. To you is the word of this salvation sent. You who are *poor*, come to be enriched. You who are *maimed*, come to be healed. You who are *halt*, come and be restored. You who are *blind*, come and be enlightened. None ever repented of coming; nor were any rejected who came. Come then to Jesus. "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."—"Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room!"

Christ the Bread of Life, and the Nature of Faith in him.

SERMON XXII.

JOHN VI. 27.

Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you.

WHEN our Saviour had fed five thousand people with five loaves and two fishes, they were so struck with the miracle, that they determined to proclaim him their king—the Messiah. But he refused their offer, and got out of their way. They followed him next day to a great distance; but our Lord, who knew their hearts, told them plainly that they acted from a corrupt principle in following him, ver. 26. "Jesus said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled." There may be a great show of zeal in running after prayers and preaching, without a spark of grace. Few persons seek Christ for his own sake, or for spiritual blessings only. Many follow him for loaves, and not for love. Let us beware of hypocrisy. These people had come many miles in hopes of another miracle; all their labour in coming so far was for bread. Now Christ shows them a more excellent way; he puts them upon a better plan: he bids them be more moderate in their wordly pursuits, and more diligent in their heavenly pursuits. But when he says, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth," you cannot suppose that he forbids men to labour in an honest way to get their daily bread. No; for God has laid

that burden on all the children of Adam: "In the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat bread;" and, "He that will not work, neither let him eat." But we are to understand it comparatively. Labour not for worldly bread in the first and chief place; it must not be our principal care and concern; and for this good reason—it perisheth; not only our necessary food, but the wealth, honour, and pleasure of the world, which men hunger for, like meat, perish; they perish in the using, and they who use them must soon perish in the grave. This shows the folly of being too eager in the pursuit of them; and at the same time should put us upon the greatest diligence in seeking for the food of our immortal souls, even Christ himself, who is the bread of life, as he largely shows in this chapter. Now, to help you in doing this, we shall,

I. Consider JESUS CHRIST under the emblem of FOOD; and,

II. Enquire into the nature of that LABOUR which is here recommended in order to obtain it.

I. Let us consider Jesus Christ under the emblem of *Food*. As we cannot understand any thing that is *spiritual*, but as it is compared to something that is *natural*, God is pleased in his word to use many *similituides*, whereby to set forth the excellencies of the Lord Jesus Christ, and recommend him to us. Hence he is called a *Sun*, to signify Light; a *Rock*, to signify Support; a *Refuge*, to signify Safety; and here he compares himself to *Food*. And this way of teaching not only helps us to understand spiritual things, but it serves to put us in mind of them; so that when we see the sun, it may remind us of Christ our light; and, when we take our meat, it may put us in mind of Jesus, the meat which endureth to eternal life. This is a part of that spiritual-mindedness, which to enjoy is life and peace. A few particulars

will convince you how properly Christ is compared to food.

1. Because Christ is as necessary to the life of the soul, as meat is to the support of the body. You know God has so formed our bodies, that we cannot live long without food. Christ is no less necessary for the soul; so it is written in this chapter, ver. 33: "For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life to the world;" and again, ver. 35, "I am the bread of life;" and ver. 51, "If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever." The same is asserted again and again throughout the chapter; the whole of which you will do well to read when you go home.

2. All kinds of food are the gift of God; no man in the world can make any thing eatable. Man can plant, and sow, and rear cattle; he can also dress his food with endless variety, when he has got the materials: but he can make none of them. No man can give life to a plant, or to a beast. Every thing we eat is the gift of a good God. Just so, Christ, the bread of life, is the gift of God. "God gave his Son." "Blessed be God for his unspeakable gift!" The manna that God sent down to feed Israel in the wilderness was a lively type of Jesus; "for the Bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven," ver. 33.

3. Most kinds of food are prepared for our use by *fire*. So Christ, as our sacrifice, endured, in the garden and on the cross, the dreadful wrath of God, as "a consuming fire." This was set forth in a lively manner by the sacrifices of old, which were burnt on the altar; which represented that Christ was to be consumed by the flames of his love for his Father and his elect, and at the same time by the flames of the divine wrath against sin, which he had undertaken to bear. But the Paschal-lamb was not wholly con-

sumed; after it was roasted with fire, it was eaten by the ancient believers: the same sacrifice which procured their safety became their food: and thus it is with us, if by faith we feed upon Christ crucified. And this leads to another remark.

4. Food must be actually received, eaten, and digested, in order to support life. It is not hearing of food, nor seeing it, nor smelling it, that will satisfy hunger, or nourish the body; nor will merely hearing of Christ, nor attending ordinances, nor partaking of sacraments, nourish the soul unto eternal life. By true faith every believer receives Christ for himself, depends upon him for his own salvation, and feeds upon him in his heart with thanksgiving. This eating is absolutely necessary to salvation, as Christ declares, ver. 53: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, ye have no life in you."

5. There is pleasure and delight in the reception of food, if persons are in health; and so there is in feeding upon Christ by faith. But then there must be spiritual health and appetite. The disordered stomach of a sick man "loatheth dainty meat:" and there are those who abhor the doctrine of salvation by Christ: but the man who is alive to God, who hungers and thirsts after righteousness, finds sweet and heavenly delight in partaking of Christ and his benefits. His love, his grace, his blood, his righteousness, his intercession, his glory, are sweeter to the taste than honey to the palate. He sits down to the Gospel-table, and finds there a feast of fat things full of marrow, and can say, with the spouse in the Canticles, "I sat under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste."

6. We may remark that, when Christ is compared to food, it intimates the *constancy* with which believers must make use of him. Many of the busi-

nesses and pleasures of life are occasional only; but we cannot live without daily bread. Just so it is that the life we live in the flesh, must be by the faith of the Son of God. "The just shall live by his faith;" and he who has once "tasted that the Lord Jesus is gracious," will say, "Evermore give me this bread!"

II. We now proceed to enquire into the nature of that *labour* which Christ recommends in the text; for he not only directed the people to moderate their worldly pursuits; saying, "Labour not for the meat that perisheth," but he directed them to employ themselves diligently in the pursuit of heavenly things—as if he had said, "Labour for the meat which endureth unto eternal life." But we are not to suppose that any sort of labour is intended, by which a sinner can *merit* eternal life, or that any diligence in religion will make a man worthy of Christ, or of the mercy of God through him. This is a common and very dangerous mistake; but this would be to subvert the whole Gospel, which teaches us that "not by works of righteousness which we have done," but "by grace are we saved, through faith; which faith itself is 'the gift of God.'" The Lord will beat down all human pride, and glorying in self. He alone must be exalted in our salvation. And it is evident, from the latter part of the text, that merit is entirely out of the question; for, of this bread of life it is said—*which the Son of Man shall* GIVE *you.* If then it be *given*, the labour required cannot be in order to merit or purchase it.

The nature of this labour may be learned from the following verses: the people asked our Lord what it was. *What shall we do that we may work the works of God?* They wanted to know whether he required any other works than Moses did: they thought something very great was necessary which they called "the works of God;" and they seemed to think that

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by some of their own good deeds they might merit this bread. Now observe Christ's plain answer. *This is the work of God, that ye believe in him whom he hath sent*—"This is the great duty which is necessary to the acceptance of your persons and your works; this is what God commands, approves, and is the author of; namely, that ye receive me, and rest your souls on me for salvation, as appointed of the Father for that purpose, and plainly authorized and approved by the miracles I have wrought."

FAITH, then, is the work intended. Believing in Christ is that labour which he recommends to us, in order to our living upon this heavenly food. You will ask—What is faith? I answer, in the words of a late Reverend Divine: "Faith signifies the believing the word of God. It relates to some word spoken, or to some promise made by him, and it expresses the belief which a person who hears it has of its being true. He assents to it, relies upon it, and acts accordingly. This is faith." We are to believe all that the word of God declares; but faith, as connected with salvation, chiefly relates to the divine testimony, or promise of God, concerning Jesus Christ. All faith relates to some testimony, human or divine. *Now*, saith St. John, *if we receive the witness* (or testimony) *of men, the witness* (or testimony) *of God is greater: for this is the witness* (or testimony) *which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness;* that is, the testimony of Christ *in himself*, in his own mind or conscience: *he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record; that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son.* 1 John v. 9—11. The Holy Spirit enlightens the mind into the true meaning of this blessed testimony; and the believer is persuaded of its truth, excel-

lence, and everlasting importance. He assents to it as true. He delights in it as good, and rests his eternal all on this foundation, expecting that God, who is faithful to his promise, will not suffer him to perish, but give him eternal life. Or, as the renowned Witsius expresses it; "As faith is an assent given to the divine truth, it includes in it the acceptance of the benefit offered by the covenant of grace. Here is my Son, says God, and salvation in him: I offer him to whoever desires him, and believes that he shall find his salvation in him. Who desires him? Who believes this? I do, says the believer: I greatly long for him: I believe my salvation to be laid up in him. I take him as thus offered to me. Be it so, saith the Lord."

Perhaps you will now ask me, But why is this called labour? Is there any difficulty in all this? Yes; much every way: for,

1. Believing in him alone for salvation is quite foreign to the notions of men by nature, and quite contrary to the terms of the covenant of works, which all natural men are under, and to which even awakened sinners are much inclined. St. Paul laments the state of the Jews, who, "being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, would not submit themselves to the righteousness of God." Rom. x. 3. They sought righteousness by their works; "they stumbled at that stumbling-stone." Rom. ix. 32. Now it is one of the hardest things in the world to bring off a moral devout man from dependance on his good works, to trust his salvation on Christ alone: therefore is believing called a labour.

2. There are many other people who think that believing in Christ for salvation is too easy, cheap, and common a thing; they would rather do some hard and difficult task: something that looks great

and meritorious; such as building a church or an hospital; giving a great deal to the poor, or wearing sackcloth, or living in a monastery, or going a pilgrimage. There have been people that have walked with spikes in their shoes, and others who have burnt their children in the fire to appease their gods. But only to believe in Christ seems too simple and easy a thing, and on that very account it is hard to them. Thus we read in the Old Testament of a Syrian General who had the leprosy, and went a long journey to be cured by Elisha the prophet. When this great man came to the door, the prophet sent out a messenger, desiring him to wash in the river Jordan, and he should be healed. This you will say was an easy thing. So it was; but that very circumstance made it hard, for it put the great man in a rage. "I thought," said he, "that he would surely come out to me, and stand, and call upon his God, and strike his hand over the place;" so he went away in a passion. But one of his servants wisely said, "If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? How much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash and be clean." He took the hint, and was perfectly healed. 1 Kings. v.

3. Another thing makes believing a labour. Many think that if such stress is laid upon faith, it will make people neglect good works, and so be hurtful to the interests of virtue and morality. Some think it is not amiss to talk of Christ and his merits to dying people, because they cannot live to abuse the doctrine; but that little should be preached about free grace and the blood of Christ, lest it should lead to licentiousness. Alas, for such persons! It is evident they are "the whole, who need not the physician." If ever they had been convinced of sin, and led to fear the wrath of a just and holy God, they

would gladly fly to the only refuge for a sinner; and they would know by experience that the Gospel is as good a doctrine to live by, as it is to die by. And indeed it is an abominable reproach upon the Holy Gospel to charge it with so bad a tendency. In fact, we know, from the word of God, from experience, and from observation, that faith purifies the heart, works by love, and produces all the fruits of righteousness and goodness.

4. But the great thing that makes believing in Christ so laborious is, the awful view that a convinced sinner often has of his guilt. He sees he has broken the law of God, and is exposed to its dreadful curse. He knows the corruption of his nature, and the plague of his heart. He feels that his heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. He ranks himself among the chief of sinners—thinks there is not another sinner in the world so bad as himself; he fears there is something singular in his case—perhaps he is ready to fear that he has committed the unpardonable sin; he complains that he is beset with blasphemous thoughts, and on all these, and perhaps on many other accounts, is afraid that there is no help for him in God.

Besides, the devil is very busy with a convinced sinner. He is afraid of losing a subject; and as it was of old with a young man who was coming to Christ for bodily cure, "while he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down and tare him;" so Satan tries all his skill, and employs all his agents, to keep the soul from Christ; he will oppose nothing so much as his fleeing to Christ by faith.

Add to these difficulties one more. The convinced and enlightened soul, who is fully persuaded there is no salvation but in Christ, is apt to think it would be presumption in him to go to Christ, as he is so guilty, so filthy, so unworthy. He thinks when he is more

reformed, more deeply humbled, and has obtained more knowledge and sanctity, then he may venture to hope in Christ. But this is a great mistake, a hurtful error: it is turning the gospel upside down. The sinner's first business is to fly to Christ; to believe the record of God concerning him; to believe that his blood cleanseth from all sin; that every coming sinner will be welcome—Christ casting out none that come to him.

These considerations fully show how properly our blessed Lord speaks in the text, LABOUR *for the meat which endureth to eternal life.* And yet, blessed be God, who is "the Author and Finisher of Faith," he can render this easy to the soul by the power of his Holy Spirit; "for he worketh in us both to will and to do according to his good pleasure." "Our sufficiency," in this respect, "is of God;" and, hard as it may seem at first, it becomes easier as we continue in the school of Christ, and there "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus."

APPLICATION.

1. The subject *reproves* us. So our Lord intended it; so let us receive it. How many among us labour hard! But for what? A morsel of bread. Six long days in a week are spent in toil, to procure a few shillings. All this is right. This is no more than what God requires. "Six days thou shalt labour, and do all thy work." But is this all? Is there no concern for the soul? Do not think, my dear friends, that labouring for the body will excuse you from "the one thing needful," which is "the care of the soul." You must mind both worlds; and both will be best minded when they are minded together. "Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things (food and raiment) shall be added to you."

Think of the vanity of this world. Remember that earthly things perish in the using; but Christ the bread of life endureth for ever: and he that eateth of this bread shall never die.

2. Do you ask, How shall I get faith? I answer, It is the gift of God, and is to be sought for by earnest prayer, and daily attention to the Gospel, the word of faith. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Attend, therefore, where Christ is preached. Christ's sheep know his voice; they know it from a stranger's voice. May you learn to distinguish; and, while you listen to the truth, pray earnestly that the Holy Spirit of truth may enlighten your minds, and enable you to mix faith with it; so shall it profit your souls.

3. We may also learn from this text that many labour in vain even in religion. They follow after righteousness; they want to be good, and hope to be saved; but they attain not their desires. What is the reason? "They seek it not by faith, but, as it were, by the works of the law." Rom. ix. 31. Avoid this rock, on which so many split; and remember that the first business in religion is to believe in Jesus. Begin with Christ, and every thing else will follow in its due order.

4. To conclude. Have any of you, by precious faith, received Christ? Do you take him as the bread of life, the food of your souls? Rejoice, then, in the assurance which God gives you of eternal life. Those who ate the manna in the wilderness all died; but, saith Christ, ver. 51, *I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.* Believe this, and be happy.

And now, what doth the Lord require of thee, happy believer in Jesus. He requireth thee to walk in

his ways, and labour in his service. When Elijah was ready to starve, the Lord provided food for him; he ate and drank, and laid down to rest. "The angel touched him a second time, and said, Arise, and eat, because the journey is too great for thee. And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went, in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights, unto the mount of God." 1 Kings xix. 7, 8. Thus, Christian, feed upon Christ, "whose flesh is meat indeed, and whose blood is drink indeed;" and, in the strength derived from Jesus, thou shalt "run without weariness, and walk without fainting," till thou reach the mountain of God, and sit down at the marriage-feast of the Lamb.

"Jesus, we bow before thy feet!
Thy table is divinely stor'd;
Thy sacred flesh our souls have ate;
'Tis living bread; we thank thee, Lord!

"Joy to the Master of the feast;
His name our souls for ever bless:
To God the King, and God the Priest,
A loud Hosanna round the place!"

SERMON XXIII.

1 PETER IV. 3, 4.

For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries; wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you.

SIN, that accursed thing Sin, was the occasion of our Saviour's death; and he died not only to save us from the guilt of sin, that we might not be condemned; but to save us also from the power of sin, that it might not rule over us. This double benefit of the Redeemer's death was signified by the water and the blood which issued from his pierced side; for St. John observes, 1 John v. 6. "This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ: not by water only, but by water and blood." By the *blood,* we are justified from the guilt of sin; by the *water,* our polluted nature is purified. Thus is Jesus a complete Saviour. Both these are equally necessary; and what God has joined together, let no man put asunder; for, as they were united in the Redeemer's design, so are they united in the experience of all who believe. When a sinner is awakened and brought to Christ for pardon, then he also feels an earnest desire for this second benefit of his death, a deliverance from the power of sin. So St. Peter teaches us in

this chapter, ver. 1. *Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind;* that is, all Christians should be armed with the same resolution against sin, and for holiness, as Christ was. But Christ, having suffered in the flesh for sin, lived in the Spirit unto God; therefore should we also cease from sin, and live no more to *the lusts of men, but to the will of God;* for, saith the Apostle, "The time past of our life may suffice." Yes, we have had enough, and too much, of sin; it has taken up too much of our time and affection; henceforth may we live to God! In these useful words we have the four following things:

I. The walk of a natural man described.

II. The great change that grace makes in such a man.

III. The reasonableness of that change: and,

IV. The usage which a changed person may expect from the world.

I. The walk of a natural man described.—*He works the will of the Gentiles,* and *lives in sin.* It is not certain whether St. Peter wrote his epistle to the Jews only, or to Gentiles also; nor is it of any consequence to us; for there is no great difference between a carnal Jew, a carnal Gentile, or a carnal Christian. All unconverted people live not according to the will of God. The will of God is the proper rule of our actions; but who inquires after this? who says, with converted Saul, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" No natural man says so; only those who, like Saul, are converted to God. And here is the grand difference between *real Christians* and all other people. The latter *walk according to the flesh;* the former *according to the Spirit;* for, as St. Paul largely shows in the eighth chapter to the Romans, *They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, but they that are after the Spirit the things of*

the Spirit. And what are all the thoughts, words, desires, pursuits, and delights of carnal men about, but something of a fleshly kind? they have no knowledge of, no care for, no delight in, any thing that is spiritual or heavenly; nor *can* they, while in that state: for, as our Lord says, John iii. 6, *That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.* Till a man is born again, he works the will of the Gentiles; he walks according to the flesh. The Lord, in his mercy, discover to those who are in this state the danger of it, and deliver them out of it by his changing grace!

Observe, in the text, *the readiness* with which men sin; they *run* to it, it is their delight; their feet are swift to do evil, while to every thing good they are dull and slow. Observe, also, that men sin in *company*, and encourage each other in sin: "they think it strange that ye run not *with them.*" Adam fell in company, and for the sake of company; and all his children are not only corrupt, but corrupters: beware then of "evil communications, which corrupt good manners," and take the wise man's advice, "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." Remark, likewise, the *constancy* with which men sin; they "*wrought* the will of the Gentiles;" they worked at sin as a man works at his trade, not occasionally, but daily. Hence sinners are called *workers of iniquity*, and as such, sentenced by Christ the Judge to eternal misery.

Let us now take notice of the particulars of this wicked course. *Lasciviousness* is first mentioned. This means wantonness, expressed in looks, words, and actions. *Lusts*, or criminal desires, and pursuits after unlawful pleasures. *Excess of wine*; that is, immoderate drinking of any strong liquors. *Revellings* and *banquetings*, feasting with songs and music, including the amusement of the playhouse, and simi-

lar diversions, which are Satan's traps to catch unwary souls. *Abominable idolatries*, or the worship of idols, which is an abominable affront to the only living and true God; and which was generally attended with abominable lewdness, drunkenness, and other vices. These were the practices of the heathen; and are they not also the practices of many called Christians? Are there not in every place some persons who run to this excess of riot? O, that such may see the error of their ways, and cry to the Lord for his mercy and grace! And this is next to be considered.

II. *The great change that the grace of God makes in a natural man.*

The change we mean is far more than the mere *reformation* of a sinner's life; it is an inward, supernatural change, wrought by the Spirit of God, and by means of the Gospel of Christ. So we read, ver. 6. of this chapter, *For this cause was the Gospel preached also to them that are dead;* that is, to those believers who were dead when St. Peter wrote, as well as to those who were then living: *that they might be judged according to men in the flesh*:—that they might judge and condemn themselves for their fleshly lusts, and mortify their carnal appetites; and so be *dead to sin, but live according to God in the Spirit;* that, being quickened from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, they might, being helped by the Spirit, be conformed to the will of God, and do those things which are pleasing in his sight.

It is by the preaching of the Gospel that this change is generally effected; for it is the Gospel only which is "the power of God to salvation." This is God's mighty instrument for "pulling down the strong holds of the devil;" for "opening men's eyes, and turning them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God."

The sinner is usually first alarmed by the *Law*,

as contained in the Ten Commandments. If his eyes are opened by the Spirit of God, he sees that "the law is spiritual," and reaches to the secret thoughts of his heart; and that having broken the law, he is under its curse. Thus, though before he was "alive without the law," the commandment comes with power to his conscience; sin revives, and he dies; that is, he now sees he is a dead man in law; justly condemned to eternal death on account of his sins.

But the law alone is insufficient to destroy the power of sin. The gospel is the instrument employed by the Holy Spirit for this purpose. Sin never appears to the believer so sinful as when he beholds Christ crucified for it. Jesus Christ, as crucified for sin, was the grand subject of apostolic preaching. The first minister of Christ "determined to know nothing among the people but Jesus Christ, and him crucified." And O, how glorious were the triumphs of the cross! It was this which subdued the hearts of poor, wretched, beastly, devilish men, among the heathen. Those who had wallowed in the filth of sin, and reduced human nature to the most degraded state, became holy, humble, chaste, temperate, honest, pious, gentle, useful men. This it was that changed St. Paul from a bloody persecutor of the saints to a humble disciple and zealous preacher of Christ. So he says, Gal. vi. 14. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." So that every believer may say and sing,

"It was the sight of thy dear cross
First wean'd my heart from earthly things,
And taught me to esteem as dross
The mirth of fools and pomp of kings."

And this shews that the very first business of a convinced sinner, who "hungers and thirsts after righte-

ousness," is to come to Christ. We have no strength and ability in ourselves, by nature, to become holy and subdue our sins; we must begin to live to God in a new way, by faith in Christ. The efforts of a natural man towards holiness are all forced and unnatural; we must have a new nature and new powers; and these we can have only in and from Christ, and by virtue of union to him, through faith. Christ dwells in the hearts of believers, and they dwell in him. They are "members of his body, and are so joined to him as to become one spirit." They are branches of Christ the tree; separate from him they can do nothing; but from union to him proceed all their good works, and sincere, acceptable obedience. Thus the soul is brought to cleave to Christ with purpose of heart, to hate every false way, and to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present evil world. This is the great change that grace makes.

III. We proceed to speak of the *reasonableness of this change.*

"The time past, (says our holy apostle,) the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles." Not as if sin was entitled to any portion of our short and mortal lives. No. A moment given to sin is a moment too much. But it may well be said "the time past" may suffice; for,

Sin is a dreadful waste of precious time. Life is very short. Time flies on swift wings; and when once gone, is gone for ever. We can never recall a lost hour. And yet how is time squandered away! O visit dying-beds, to learn the value of time. What would some dying people give for a few weeks, or a few hours! There have been instances of rich men who have offered physicians half their estates, if they could prolong their lives for a few weeks! And

what is the "worm that never dies," but the horrid remorse of a damned sinner, reflecting with intolerable anguish, upon the loss of his time and abuse of his mercies in a life of sin?

Sin is also a *useless* thing. "What fruit had ye?" said St. Paul to the converted Romans: "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?" What profit, honour, or pleasure did ye find in your former sinful courses, even while pursuing them? Were they not attended with remorse trouble, mischief, and stings of conscience? And what bitter fruits do they produce in reflection: as holy Job says, "Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the sins of my youth."

Sin is extremely *hurtful* and *dangerous* to ourselves and others. The sinner is like the madman, who casteth abroad fire-brands, arrows, and death, and saith, Am I not in sport?" You would shudder to see a child playing with a razor, or with the fire; or standing on the brink of a deep precipice on the sea coast! Yet such is the state of every man in his sins. Such was once our state; and may not the time past suffice to have wrought the will of the flesh, yea the will of the devil, who was aiming at our destruction? "for the end of those things is death;" the direct tendency and due desert of these sinful practices, is nothing less than death temporal and eternal. How dreadfully mischievous is the sinner to his neighbour! He cannot be content to perish alone. Like the devil, he labours to bring others into the same condemnation with himself. He is a soul murderer. What a melancholy reflection to a considerate mind—"Perhaps there are souls now in hell, who perished by my means!" It was the dread of such a reflection that probably made Dives wish that a message might be sent to his five brethren, to prevent their coming to that place of torment; for it is likely they had been

led into sin by his infidel counsel and wicked example; and he knew that if they came there, they would upbraid him as the author of their ruin. Now surely the time past may suffice to have been so hurtful to ourselves and others.

It is also reasonable to forsake sin, "because it is so highly dishonourable to the blessed God." Surely God deserves to be loved and obeyed by all his creatures; but sin is an act of robbery; it defrauds God of his just rights, and transfers to Satan the obedience due to him. It is an act of treason and rebellion against the Majesty of heaven. Yea, it is a kind of *atheism;* for in vain we profess "to know God, if in works we deny him:" if we live in sin, we live "without God in the world."

Once more, a life of sin, is directly contrary to our Christian profession. Why do we call ourselves *Christians*, if we neither obey nor resemble Christ? Why call we him Master and Lord, if we do not the things which he commands? Were we not baptized unto Christ? and does not our baptism signify "a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness?" a renouncing the world, the flesh, and the devil? To be a Christian indeed, is to be a follower of Christ, to have the same mind in us that was in him, and to walk even as he walked; but what a horrid contradiction there is in such names and characters as these —a drunken Christian—a lying Christian—a lewd Christian—a profane Christian. I remember to have read of Alexander the Great, that he had a soldier in his army of his own name, but understanding that he was a base cowardly fellow; he called him into his presence, and reproaching him with his cowardice, said, "Either change your name or fight better!" And how properly might the great and holy Redeemer say to wicked men professing to be Christians, "Renounce the name of Christians, or live better!"

How reasonable then is it to forsake sin, seeing it is such a waste of precious time; so useless; so hurtful to ourselves and others: so dishonourable to God, and so contrary to our holy profession as Christians. Rather let us obey the exhortation of St. Paul, Rom. xii. 1: "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service;" it is fit and right, as we are the creatures of God, the Author of all our powers, and especially if we are partakers of his grace and love in Christ Jesus;—"for of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen!"

IV. Lastly, we are to consider *the usage which a changed person may expect to meet with from a wicked world;* "they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you;" they wonder what is come to you, that you have so suddenly forsaken their company, and their pleasures; they cannot account for such a strange alteration, and they despise you as stiff, unsociable, foolish creatures, or as mad enthusiasts.

Now here observe that, where such a change as this takes place, it is visible; for if the world did not see it, they could not hate it. And, indeed, when persons who have lived in open sin become serious and holy, the change cannot be hid. It is said of Barnabas, that "when he came to Antioch, and had *seen* the grace of God, he was glad:" the grace of God, as a spiritual principle in the heart, cannot be seen by bodily eyes; but the effects of it in a holy life and conversation must and will be seen. Christians, however humbled and retired, are like "a city set upon a hill, which cannot be hid;" they are like "a candle that giveth light unto all that are in the house;" and their "light must so shine before men,

that they may see their good works, and glorify their Father who is in heaven." Matt. v. 14, 15, 16. Yes, the change we speak of will be observed. Carnal companions will be deserted: places of vain amusement forsaken. No oath, or filthy jest, or light expression, will proceed from the mouth; the places where the Gospel is preached will be frequented, the Sabbath-day will be carefully kept holy, and the whole behaviour and appearance will be such as become godliness.

This will excite hatred. "The carnal mind is enmity against God," and every thing godly and godlike. When God permits, persecution will follow: and, if this is not public by the magistrate (which, blessed be God, our laws prevent), yet relations, friends, and neighbours show their dislike. "Every one who liveth godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution;" so the Scripture declares, and so serious persons will be sure to find it. Nor let them wonder or be offended at this, for from the beginning it was so. "He that was born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the Spirit." And every believer must bear the cross; if not *Abel's* cross, yet *Isaac's*; if not martyrdom, yet mocking. *They think it strange*, and then *speak evil;* perhaps they will falsely accuse you; they will say you are hypocrites, and take up a profession of religion to answer some wicked purposes. But be not offended; this is rather "a token for good" on your behalf, while on their's it is an awful evidence of their Christless, dangerous state; for, as it follows in the next verse, "They shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead;" they must answer for all "their ungodly deeds and hard speeches;" and what will they answer to Jesus, on whom their reproaches fall, when he shall say, "Why persecute ye me?" Let persecutors consider how they will answer this!

APPLICATION.

We have considered, in the first place, the walk *of a natural man:* and may we not say, Lord, what is man! What a wretched, fallen, guilty creature is man! How is our nature depraved which inclines us to such a course; and what abundant cause is there for mourning and lamentation on this account! And say, my friends, what sort of a walk is *ours?* Whose will do we follow? Is it the will of the flesh, or the will of God? Which of these do *you* consult? Do you consider in your daily walk, Will this action I am going to do, this pleasure I am going to take, please God or not?

Learn also that *the commonness of sin affords no excuse for it.* The will of the Gentiles, or the way of the world, is the broad way to ruin. Follow not the multitude to do evil. Forsake the foolish and live. The narrow road that leads to heaven has but few travellers; God grant we may be found among the number!

From what has been said, *the necessity of regeneration* evidently appears. Is the heart of man so corrupt? Is he so strongly inclined to the will of the world, and the beastly lusts of the flesh, what then can effect an entire change and alteration, first in the heart, and then in the life? "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" With man this is impossible; but nothing is too hard for the Lord. The people to whom St. Peter wrote had felt this change, and so have thousands in all ages. For this purpose the Lord hath sent his Gospel hither. Salvation has come to this house. "To you is the word of this salvation sent." The Lord open your hearts, as he did Lydia's, to attend to the word. Which of you is willing to be saved; to be saved *now;* to be saved from sin; to be saved by Jesus? He is

able to save to the uttermost: it is his office to save: it is his delight to save; and therefore he sends us, in his name, to invite you to come to him; to beseech you to be reconciled to God. Come, then, fellow-sinners, all things are ready. Come to this great and loving Saviour, and he will wash you from all your past sins in the fountain of his precious blood, and give you a new heart, a heart to love him, and walk in his holy, pleasant ways.

Christians! with what holy shame and grief may you review the former part of your lives. May not "the time past suffice to have wrought the will of the Gentiles?" Did you not live long enough in sin? Ah, you will say, Too, too long! O, the vanity of my childhood and youth! O, the mis-spent Sabbaths! O, my youthful wantonness, lusts, and revellings! I look back upon them with a mixture of shame and indignation. I blush to lift up my face to a holy God. I smite my breast with the Publican, and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

And now, my friends, what doth the Lord require of us? Have we lost so much time while we were in our sins; O, let us be doubly diligent in future! Let us redeem the time, for the days are few and evil. Let us be active for God, for our own souls, and for others. Let us lay ourselves out for usefulness; and, instead of *running* with the wicked in the ways of sin, let us run with enlarged hearts in the ways of God. "Let us exhort one another daily, and so much the more, as we see the day approaching."

DIVES *and* LAZARUS; *or the Sufficiency of Scripture for the Purposes of Salvation.*

(Intended as a check to Infidelity.)

SERMON XXIV.

LUKE XVI. 31.

If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

ETERNITY is at hand! Let us take a view of it—a view set before us by Jesus Christ himself: by him "who brought life and immortality to light;" and who best knew how to describe the state of a saint in heaven, and a sinner in hell. Our text is the conclusion of a parable, designed to reprove the Pharisees, who were covetous and worldly. Here we have an account of a very wicked man, who was rich, and of a very good man, who was poor. Death came and ended all the pleasures of the one, and all the pains of the other. The rich man, being in hell, desires the poor man may be sent from heaven to convert his brethren on earth; but he it told in these words, that if they would not mind their Bible, they would mind nothing else. This text, my friends, is chosen on purpose to recommend the Bible to you, that you may not neglect the only book which, under God, is able to save your souls.

We read in the 19th verse—"There was a certain rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day." It is not a sin to be rich, nor is it a sin for the rich to wear handsome clothes, nor to keep good tables: but it is very danger-

ous to the soul to be rich; because those who have much of the world, are tempted to love the world too much, to forget God, and to neglect their souls. A life of ease, pleasure, and honour, is so contrary to a life of faith, repentance, and self-denial, that few rich men are saved.

Ver. 20, 21. "And there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, who was laid at his gate full of sores; and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores." Learn from this, that we cannot judge of any man's state before God, by his circumstances in the present world. A wicked man may be very prosperous, and a good man may be in great affliction. Poor *Lazarus* was *helpless* indeed, as his name signifies: it is hard to be poor, but harder still to be sick and poor. Lazarus could not work, or he would not have begged. He could not even walk. Somebody was kind enough to bring him to the rich man's gate, for there was no parish relief in those days, in hope that he would be observed, pitied, and relieved. Poor Lazarus was very modest and humble. A bit of broken meat was all that he wanted: but this was denied. The wanton pampered dogs came and licked his running sores, which shows that he had not a bit of linen to cover them, and keep them from the air; and he was so weak that he could not keep off the dogs, which seemed ready to devour him.

What a picture is this of a hard-hearted rich man and a patient beggar! Dives could not plead that he was oppressed by a number of beggars, for Lazarus was alone; nor that he was unknown to him, for he lay at the gate; nor could he say he was idle, and might work, for he lay helpless on the ground; nor that he wanted a great deal, for he would have been contented with crumbs; nor that his servants

took care of him, for not one of them relieved him! Well! if man will not pity, God will.

"It came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom."

No doubt, death was welcome to him. He had nothing in this world to set his heart upon: that is an advantage which the poor have above the rich. Poor Lazarus sunk at last under his heavy burthens. Perhaps his wounds mortified; or he might be starved to death. But blessed are the dead that die in the Lord; they cease from their labours and troubles, and are at rest. Angels, who are ministering spirits to the saints, carried his departing soul to glory; where, like an honoured guest at a feast, he was placed next to the father of the faithful, in whose steps, no doubt, he had trodden, having been a partaker of the same precious faith.

The rich man also died, and was buried. "Riches profit not in the day of wrath." Money will not bribe death. Dives was bound to the world by a thousand silken cords, and golden chains; but death broke them all in a moment, and hurried away his guilty, unprepared soul to the torments of hell. What availed his pompous funeral? The pampered carcass must be the food of worms, while his wretched spirit is confined to the regions of despair.

"And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom; and he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame." Ver. 23, 24.

His eyes, once fixed on earth and earthly things, and which were always turned away from God and his word, are now forced to look upwärd: and the glimmering of light only serves to discover, at a dreadful distance, the happiness he had lost by his

sins, and the bliss of that neglected child of God, who once lay and perished at his gate.

Observe. *Now* he prays. He should have prayed on earth, then he would have been heard. He prays to a saint, he should have prayed to God. He pleads relation to Abraham, calling him Father. Church privileges, or relation to pious people, will not save wicked professors. He asks for *mercy;* but he asks too late; the door of mercy is for ever shut. He does not expect deliverance, he asks only a moment's partial ease; but this he asks in vain: and how just it is, that he who refused a crumb should be denied a drop! Observe the answer—ver. 25.

"Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented."

Mark this well, you who place your happiness in eating and drinking, and putting on fine clothes. Are these *your* "good things?" Poor portion, indeed! No man can have a greater curse than to be rich, and take his pleasure, and enjoy himself continually, if this be his all; if his heart be set on these things, while he lives in sin, neglects his soul, and is alienated from the life of God. The remembrance of such a carnal state will be the hell of hell. Remorse for such cursed folly is "the worm that never dies," and will add fuel to the fire that shall never be quenched. Lazarus had all his evil things on earth. He had borne the cross, as every one must do, who follows Christ. Not that he was saved by his poverty and afflictions. There is no merit in these things. Christ alone can save us from our sins; and there are many who are miserable here, who will be miserable also in hell. But Lazarus was a pardoned sinner, and was born of God. Perhaps his afflictions led him to God: and it is happy for poor people

when their troubles are sanctified to them; when they learn the evil of sin in the evil of suffering; and having no comfort of a worldly kind, seek comfort in the knowledge of Christ and true religion.

"And besides all this, said Abraham; between us and you there is a great gulph fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot: neither can they pass to us, that would come from hence:" ver. 26. Awful separation! Now, saints and sinners meet in the same church; but the distinction will soon be made, and no more intercourse be suffered for ever. The kindest relation, the dearest friend, cannot come to speak one word of comfort to the lost soul; nor can the prisoner of hell ever make his escape, or obtain a release for a single hour. But though the miseries of the damned admit of no relief, they are capable of addition. Should their relations come thither, seduced to sin by their counsel or example, it would add to their torments. This was what Dives dreaded, and therefore he cries to Abraham, ver. 27, 28.—"I pray thee, therefore, Father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house; for I have five brethren: that he may testify unto them, lest they also come unto this place of torment."

Dives felt the hell which he formerly disbelieved. He had made a jest of hell many a time, and laughed at the fears of religious people, and their pains to avoid it. He had taught his brothers to do the same; and, encouraged by his example to persist in a sinful course, he had reason to expect each of them would follow him to hell, accuse him as their tempter, and charge their ruin to him. This, he knew, would increase his sufferings.

Let this be a warning to those who encourage their acquaintance in drunkenness, whoredom, dishonesty, or other sins. Great is the guilt of enticing

others to sin, and great will be their torment, when a new sufferer arrives to lay his ruin at their door!

Ver. 29. "Abraham saith unto him, they have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." From this answer it is plain that, in the judgment of Christ, there was enough in the Scriptures of the Old Testament to convince men that there is another life after this; a future state of rewards and punishments, whatever some pretend to the contrary. It was the privilege of the Jews to have this testimony: it was sufficient for their conviction; and it was the sin and ruin of those who disregarded it. We, my friends, have the same advantage, and a much greater added to it. We have Christ, the Evangelists, and the Apostles. Let us hear them.

Dives was not satisfied with this reply, but said, ver. 30.—"Nay, Father Abraham, but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent." He carries with him to hell the same slight thoughts he had of the Bible when on earth. He presumes to be wiser than God, and to dictate a more effectual means of conversion than God was pleased to appoint. It is as if he had said, "They do not mind the Bible; its doctrines, commands, and threatenings are grown familiar to them; nay, they make a jest of it all. But an apparition would startle them: "If Lazarus, whom they knew to be a good man, were to appear to them, and tell them how happy he is in heaven, and how miserable I am in hell, they would be alarmed, converted, and forsake their sins."

Observe, now, the final answer that Abraham gives—"If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." This answer well suits the present times, when many wicked men with a boldness unknown in former days, try to rob us of our Bibles, and cheat us of eternal life. There is nothing new,

my friends, under the sun. The devil began his work of destruction by persuading Eve to disbelieve the word of God. He has carried on his murderous designs by the same means ever since; and he is making a bold push by his infamous agents at this day, to keep people in their sins, by denying the truth of scripture, and so taking away all motives to true religion, arising from the hope of heaven or the fear of hell.

Consider for a moment *what* the Scriptures testify —*Why* we should receive their testimony, and—that if *Their* testimony be rejected, no other would be effectual.

The Scriptures certainly testify that the soul of man does not die with the body—that there is a glorious heaven and a dreadful hell. It should seem that Dives laughed at all this; perhaps *you* do. Certainly he did not believe it, or why should Lazarus be sent to certify it to his brethren? Had he believed it, he would have led a very different life: he would not have lived a life of luxury, but a life of self-denial and holiness; nor could he have been so hard-hearted to the poor. Do we believe there is a hell for sinners? We shall fly from the wrath to come. Do we believe there is a heaven for the people of God? We shall strive to enter in. Let our practice, Sirs, prove whether we are believers or infidels. Where there is faith there must be works. All the rest is *hypocrisy*.

The Scriptures also testify that all mankind are, by the fall of Adam, in a polluted, apostate state; guilty before God, and exposed to his dreadful anger. But they also testify that God has so loved the world as to send his Son to be a Saviour—to satisfy divine justice by shedding his blood; and that he has sent his Spirit also to renew by his grace the hearts of men, and make them new creatures: and

that whosoever believes in the Son of God, shall not perish in hell, but be saved from sin and brought to glory. Many other things the Scriptures teach, but these are the greatest.

Now, my brethren, if we are asked *Why* we believe these things, we are able to give a reason of the hope that is in us. There is no evidence that an unbeliever, like Dives, can now desire, that has not already been given. Dives asked for a miracle. God wrought many miracles by Moses, and more by Jesus Christ; and these are more credible than the apparition of a deceased friend would be. Moses performed many miracles in Egypt and the Wilderness; for the truth of which he appeals to the whole multitude of Israel. Now, is it possible that a million of people could be persuaded that they saw and heard things which they did not see nor hear? Would they not have contradicted him? Could they, for instance, have believed that they had passed through the Red Sea, and that they had subsisted upon manna, in a miraculous manner, for many years, and that their garments had not worn out, if no such things had happened?

But, not to dwell on Moses or the prophets, let us consider the wonderful works of Jesus Christ; who, by the way, confirms the character of Moses; so that the character of Moses and of Christ must stand or fall together.

Jesus Christ appealed to his miracles for the proof of his mission. To the disciples of John, who enquired whether he were the true Messiah or not, he said, "Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them." Matt. xi. 4, 5. All these things are truly miraculous, and such as

Divine Power alone is able to perform: but they were perfectly easy to him, and they fully proved his divine authority. These things were not done in a corner, they were done openly, and some of them before thousands of witnesses. His great enemies, the Jews, could not, did not, deny them; they only wickedly ascribed them to the power of the devil. The Evangelists wrote an account of these miracles in the very country where they were performed, and near the time; so that if they had not been done, thousands would have risen up and contradicted their testimony. The Apostles went forth into various countries preaching the Gospel of Christ, and confirming its truth by their miraculous works; and surely they cannot be accused of priestcraft. Did not they, as well as the prophets, forfeit the esteem of men, and endure great hardships, even death itself? And was not their whole conduct an evidence of their sincerity?

But our faith does not rest only on the miracles. Prophecy, or predicting events long before they happened, is a proof equally strong. We could give many unanswerable proofs of this kind, but our limits forbid.

The excellent effects of the Christian religion wherever it is truly received, is another argument in its favour. We daily see, that by the preaching of the Gospel, sinners are converted to God; that bad men are made good men; they become "new creatures," as the Scripture calls them. So it was at the first: some of the greatest persecutors became Christians, and whole nations forsook their idols; and thousands in those nations forsook their detestable practices, and became sober, just, devout, and benevolent. Now, this is a continued miracle; we see it wrought to this day. May God give you, my friends, to know the power of divine truth in your own hearts, and its holy influence upon your temper and conduct, and then

you will have the witness or testimony in yourselves to the truth of Christianity? and this will be more satisfactory than all other evidences put together.

And now say, my friends, if any other, any new testimony, is wanting to confirm the truth of Scripture? Dives wished that a person might rise from the dead to convince his brethren; and perhaps there are some people in England who would wish the same. Suppose God should grant their wish. Suppose that in the silent hours of darkness something should appear—something exactly like one of our friends, whom we knew was dead and buried a month before. Suppose he should say, "I am such an one—I am come to tell you that there is a holy God—there is a glorious heaven—there is a dreadful hell—Forsake your sins, and believe in Jesus, or you will perish for ever! What effect do you think such a vision would have? Probably it would frighten you to death; or if you survived it, and were deeply impressed with it, it is likely that the cares and pleasures of life would wear off the impression in a little time. As to your friends, they would not believe you; they would try to laugh or reason you out of your fancies; they would say it was a dream, or that you were mad; and if your heart were not changed by grace, you would yourself begin to doubt, and judge that you were somehow or other imposed upon; so would you remain just what you were, or perhaps become worse.

But not to argue on suppositions, let us resort to matter of fact. The experiment has been tried, and was ineffectual. You remember to have read, in the 11th of St. John, an account of the resurrection of another Lazarus, who lived and died at Bethany, about two miles from Jerusalem. Jesus Christ went to his tomb, and in the presence of many people, cried aloud "Lazarus, come forth;" the dead heard the voice of the Son of God and lived; he that had been dead

four days came forth in his shroud, and walked home to his house. This miracle was never denied; it was acknowledged and dreaded by the chief priests and rulers: the neighbours saw him, conversed with him, ate and drank with him; but what effect had it? Some indeed believed; others turned informers, and went and told his enemies, who said, "This man doth many miracles; if we let him alone, all men will believe on him." From that day, therefore, they sought to murder him. So that we see outward evidence alone, however strong, is insufficient of itself to produce faith in the carnal heart.

Take another instance. Our Lord Jesus often declared that he would rise again upon the third day after his death. The appointed hour arrived, and behold there was a great earthquake. The Saviour rose; the keepers, the soldiers, were terrified; they became as dead men! But were *they* converted? No; the chief priests and elders hired the soldiers, who saw the resurrection, to tell a lie, and say, that while they slept, the disciples of Jesus stole him away.—A foolish lie it was; for, if they were asleep, as they pretended, how could they know what happened: and if not asleep, the pretended robbery was impossible; but it proves that the most sensible, the most awful evidence, will not convince or convert men without the concurrent operation of the Holy Spirit. In like manner, we might shew that the most singular and awful providences, such as the death of near relations, and remarkable escapes from death, and the most dreadful views of eternity, and the most solemn vows and resolutions made at such times, prove insufficient to make men truly religious.

Let us now hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Be thankful for your Bible; prize your Bible; read and study your Bible daily; praying to God to give you his Spirit, that you may rightly understand it, and

be thereby made wise to salvation. Avoid bad books and bad men as you would avoid poison. Regard not their objections; they can make none that have not been answered a thousand times. Their cavils are mere trifling, like a man who despises such a building as St. Paul's church, on account of a small flaw or two in the surface of a stone. The Scriptures are fulfilling daily before your eyes; and the very objections of infidels are a proof of their truth; for, as our Saviour declared, "Men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil;" and this is the grand source of infidelity, ancient and modern. Sinners are against the Bible, because the Bible is against them.

Read this parable again when you go home; and learn from it not to envy sinners, however rich and prosperous. Repine not at poverty; but pray it may be sanctified to the benefit of your souls. Be content with the evidence God has given you of a future state; be concerned, by faith in Jesus, to avoid the miseries of hell: and to be made meet, by the grace of God, to enjoy, with all the redeemed, the unspeakable joys of the heavenly world, for ever and for ever. God grant this may be the happiness of each of us, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen!

SERMON XXV.

PROVERBS III. 17.

Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.

IT is a maxim admitted by all the world, that "Every one is drawn by pleasure." But it is the misery of our fallen nature, that we are not drawn so much by the *best* pleasures, as by the *worst;* that the pleasures we generally prefer end in pain; and that the pleasures we commonly neglect, are such as would make us happy for ever. These are the pleasures of religion, called in our text, *the ways of wisdom;* by which we may understand the ways prescribed to us by Christ, who is WISDOM itself, and the pursuit of which is the true wisdom of man; for "the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, that is understanding."

All men seek happiness; but few know where to find it. They may be compared to a number of seamen, sailing from different ports, in quest of a very rich and beautiful country, which they have heard much of, but never saw; and the greater part of whom set out without a map or compass: is it any wonder if few of them ever reach the desired spot? Just so it is with young persons, who are eagerly desirous of pleasure; they are willing to take any pains, or run any risk for it; but they never

seriously enquire what is true happiness; and how they may certainly acquire it? Now, if we will take Jesus Christ for our Counsellor, (and "none teacheth like him,") he will assure us that "his ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace." Satan indeed says that the ways of *sin* are pleasantness; so he told Eve: she believed him; and you know the consequence. Satan also says that the ways of religion are painful and irksome. But whom will you believe, the God of truth, or, "the father of lies;" he that "cannot lie," or "he that deceiveth the whole world?" God's testimony is true; and it is confirmed by ten thousand witnesses. All the good men that ever lived will bear witness to the pleasures of religion: yea, the death-beds of wicked men are constrained to confess the same.

But let us now consider, What the pleasures of religion are; and we may rank them under the following heads:

I. *The possession of Christian graces.*

II. *The enjoyment of Christian privileges; and,*

III. *The performance of Christian duties.*

I. The possession of *Christian graces* is a source of pleasure.

The great thing which distinguishes a real Christian from another man is, his having the Spirit. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his;" and whoever has the Spirit has the seal of God, and the earnest of heaven. "The water that I shall give him," said Christ, when speaking of the Spirit, "shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life." Now, the Spirit of God is the author of a new and divine life in the soul of a believer. He is born of God. He is a new creature. Every grace is implanted in the soul; the exercise of which is as natural and pleasant to the new nature, as the due exercise of our senses is to the natural man.

Knowledge: the knowledge of God in Christ, is pleasant. It is to the soul what the light of the sun is to the body. "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun." St. Paul, who was blessed with this knowledge, "counted all things but loss for the excellency of it;" and was so delighted with it, that "he determined to know nothing else."

Faith is a pleasant grace. It gives subsistence to things unseen. It realizes the world to come. It beholds Jesus, though invisible to the carnal eye. It sees him on the cross, and on the throne; and seeing him, it "rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory." This is the grace that receives the promises; the "exceeding great and precious promises," and derives infinite sweetness and satisfaction from them.

Repentance has its pleasures too—our Lord himself being judge. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." If there be any thing in religion that *seems* unpleasant, it is this; and yet there is more satisfaction in the tears that are shed for our sins, than there was pleasure in the commission of them. Besides, "he that sows in tears shall reap in joy;" and it is far better to smart for sin on earth, than to burn for it in hell.

Hope is certainly a pleasant grace. Hope is the cordial of life. The believer's hope is well founded. It is "a good hope, through grace;" not the hope of the hypocrite, which is a flash of light, followed by the blackness of eternal darkness. It is "a lively hope," that shall never make ashamed, for it is founded on Jesus, the rock of ages.

Love is undoubtedly pleasant—the Love of God. God, reconciled in Christ, is the proper object of the creature's love. All the misery that mortals ever knew, is in consequence of forsaking God, and trans-

ferring their love to sin; nor can true happiness ever be known, till the soul returns to God. The love of our neighbour too, affords unspeakable pleasure. There is no luxury upon earth equal to that of doing good. It resembles the happiness of God himself.

II. The enjoyment of *Christian privileges* is another spring of religious pleasure.

It is the Christian's privilege to have *peace with God*, through faith in the blood of Christ. Whoever, under a sense of his sin and misery, flies to the refuge of the Saviour's arms, is gladly received, and freely pardoned. In the fountain of his blood, he is washed from all sin. In the righteousness of Jesus, he is justified from all accusations. He is no longer in a state of condemnation; he has "passed from death unto life." And what condition can equal this? If a number of prisoners were in jail under sentence of death, and one was brought out by the king's pardon, who would be thought happy? the pardoned man, though clothed with rags; or the criminals within, though clothed with purple, and faring sumptuously every day? The pardoned man, however poor, would be reckoned far happier than the condemned malefactors, however rich. And so in this case—"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." A sense of this in the conscience, is the greatest happiness upon earth; it is "the peace that passeth all understanding." And it is sad to think that the greater part of mankind live without this; and are deluding themselves with a *false* peace—for "there is no peace to the wicked," or, none but the devil's peace. O, how can wicked men enjoy themselves at all! If their eyes were open they would be like *Belshazzar* at his impious feast; the hand-writing upon the wall spoils all his mirth: so would it be with the ungodly man at the

play-house, the card-table, the alehouse, or the dancing-room; he would see SIN, WRATH, DEATH, JUDGMENT, and HELL, written, as it were, in flaming letters on the wall; he would tremble with fear, and take no rest, till he obtained the blessed privilege, "peace with God" by the blood of Christ.

This holy calm sometimes swells into sacred *Joy*; yea, "Joy unspeakable and full of glory;" for the kingdom of God is not only righteousness and peace, but "*joy* in the Holy Ghost." What joy results to a believer from the consideration of the hell he has escaped, the pardon he has obtained, the grace he has received, and the glory which awaits him! Every thing that can contribute to human joy, and ten thousand times more, unite to make him a happy man. The contemplation of Christ alone is enough. What wonders of grace and glory meet in him! All that is great, noble, amiable, heavenly, is seen in Jesus. All power, wisdom, patience, grace, mercy, love, and faithfulness are combined in him. "He is the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely." And when the believer can add, "This is MY beloved, and this is MY friend!" his joy is full. And well may that object create bliss in the heart, which is the heaven of heaven above; for we have no higher idea of celestial felicity, than that it consists in "being with Christ, and beholding his glory."

What a privilege is *Adoption* into the family of God! "To as many as have received Christ, he hath given power to become the sons of God." And O, "what manner of love is this!" "Pardoned rebels taken into the house of God, into the arms of God, yea, into the heart of God!" "I will be a FATHER unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." And this not a formal title, or an empty name, like many of those nominal

honours which distinguish the sons of men. No; it is connected with freedom of access into a father's presence; holy boldness and familiarity as with a parent; a constant share of his tender love, gracious communications, and providential bounty. He, who created and governs the world, bids us "cast all our care upon him," unbosom all our sorrows, and commit all our concerns for time and eternity to his management, for "he careth for us." He promises never to forget us; to withhold no good thing from us; and to make all things work together for our good.

These are some of the believer's privileges in *life*. But religion never shews its real value more than in *a dying hour*. And then, nothing else avails. Wicked men, who have despised it all their lives, are forced, at last, to have recourse to its *forms*; and in general, they who have lived without its power, are contented and *cheated* with its form, when they die. They bear, however, a strong testimony to the excellency of religion; for, commonly, "Men may live fools; but fools they cannot die." Like wretched Balaam, they wish "to die the death of the righteous;" but most men die as they live. Yet, the God of all grace hath sometimes wrought miracles of mercy at the eleventh hour.

But, O, the privilege of dying in the Lord! "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." Mark the end of the Christian: it is peace. The God whom he has feared, and loved, and served, will not forsake him now. The Saviour who died for him will support him in dying. Death has lost its sting; and blessed is the death of him that has an interest in the death of Christ.

Our limits oblige us very briefly to run over the Christian privileges; let us open another source of his pleasures; namely,

III. The performance of *Christian duties.* Of these, *Prayer* is the first and chief. "Behold he prayeth!" was the first mark of Paul's conversion. And this is so pleasant to the Christian, that he cannot live without it. As well might a man live without breathing, as a Christian without praying. He esteems it a blessed privilege to "call upon the Lord in the day of trouble," and to be graciously heard and delivered. He loves the Lord, who heard the voice of his supplication, and determines to call upon him as long as he lives. The duty of *Praise* is also very pleasant. It is not only a comely but a *pleasant* thing to be thankful. "Is any man merry," saith St. James, "let him sing Psalms." Singing the praises of God with the heart, is a delightful service, akin to the joys of heaven. *Reading* and *hearing the word of God* are also exceedingly pleasant. As new-born babes desire the breast, so new-born souls desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby. "The law of thy mouth," saith David, "is better to me than thousands of gold and silver. How sweet are thy words to my taste; yea, sweeter than honey to my palate!" "They are more to me than my necessary food." Yes, whoever is born of God, loves the word; and whoever dislikes it, cavils at it, neglects it, has a sure evidence of being in a carnal state. *The Lord's day,* and the public ordinances of God's house, are very pleasant to a believer. From his very soul, he calls the Sabbath a "delight, holy of the Lord, and honourable;" he esteems "a day in his courts better than a thousand;" he is "glad when it is said, Let us go up to the house of the Lord, and he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths." O, if poor carnal sinners knew the pleasures of the godly in the worship of the Lord, they would be ashamed of their poor mean, idle, worldly amusements; and gladly forsake them for the more solid, refined, and heavenly joys of the

children of God. These are but a small part of the Christian's pleasures. We might add, his sacred joy at the table of the Lord; his sweet meditations on divine subjects; his profitable conversation with fellow Christians; the supports he finds under afflictions; and the prospects he enjoys of eternal felicity.

And as all these are good and pleasant in *themselves*, so they appear to greater advantage, if you *compare* them with the pleasures of the world. They are certainly far more *solid* and *satisfying*; far more *rational* and *noble*: and, above all, far more *durable*.

"The most innocent of our carnal pleasures, such as eating, drinking, sleeping, and the like, are the badges of our weakness, and a sort of reproach upon our nature; and it is our inclination to them, rather than any excellence in them, that makes them alluring." They are needful, it is true, at present; but when our nature shall be glorified, we shall be "as the angels," and require none of these things. And when a man places his happiness in sensual pleasures, and carries them to excess in gluttony, drunkenness, uncleanness, and so on, he becomes a brute rather than a man; and the Scripture pronounces him, *dead while he liveth*. "The good man is satisfied from himself;" he has an inward source of joy; but the carnal man who roves abroad for happiness, is never satisfied. "The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing." The best of his pleasures perish in his using. Solomon says, "As the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of a fool"—a noisy blaze, and soon over. Let a wise man listen to the impertinent, vain, foolish, proud, profane conversation of a set of gay and loose people in a tavern; what a mass of nonsense and wickedness does it appear! and could it be written down and shewn to the company themselves, surely they would be ashamed of it! How childish are the amusements of the card table! How

strange that a number of rational and immortal beings should spend hours upon hours in playing with bits of painted paper! How ridiculous for a company of grown people to be jumping and running about a room in their dancing assemblies! How foolish for thousands of men and women to trail many miles to a race ground, just to see one horse's head before another! Not to mention other pleasures of the world, which are as *criminal* as they are *mean*, which will by no means bear reflection, but fill the mind with painful remorse. Ah! what real pleasure can that man enjoy, who is forced to review the past with regret, to look on the present with confusion, and on the future with dread and dismay? The carnal pleasure-taker is an hypocrite in his mirth. "Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness." It is recorded in the life of Colonel Gardiner, that before his conversion, when he gave loose to all his carnal passions, and lived in many guilty pleasures; when he was deemed by his companions, so happy, that they called him the *happy rake;* he was even then so miserable, at times, through the stings of his conscience, that he has envied a dog that came into the room, wishing rather to have been that dog, than to be a man who "must give an account of himself to God." This is what wise and holy Job, long ago observed—"Though wickedness is sweet in his mouth; though he hide it under his tongue; though he spare it, and forsake it not; but keep it still within his mouth; yet his meat in his bowels is turned; it is the gall of asps within him." How just is the comparison! Sin is the *food* of a carnal man; it is his meat and drink to do the will of his father which is in hell. This food is very sweet to him, sweeter than honey and the honey-comb; so sweet that he is unwilling to lose the relish of it, but tries to enjoy it as long as possible. But what is the consequence? Is this

sweet food wholesome? No. It is turned in his bowels to *poison*. It is the *gall of asps* within him: The bite of an asp was deadly. There was no remedy for it; it killed in four hours, and yet it killed with little pain. Thus Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt, destroyed herself. Just so the sinner dies; he may be stupified and feel no terror in his soul; but the bitterness that flows from sin, is the bitterness of everlasting death.

APPLICATION.

We have now taken a view of the pleasures of religion; in the possession of Christian graces, in the enjoyment of Christian privileges, and in the performance of Christian duties. And, now, dear young people, are you not almost persuaded to be Christians? May God persuade you altogether! If you doubt the truth of what we have asserted, we appeal to Christ himself. Hear him. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls; for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Do you love pleasure? I know you do. Seek it then in Christ's way, and not in the ways of sin. There is nothing in religion that is really irksome and unpleasant. Even that which seems to be so—as repentance, self-denial, and the mortification of sin, is rendered easy by the grace of God. And were it not so, what are the pains of a moment to the pains of eternity?

> "Who would not give a trifle to prevent
> What he would give a thousand worlds to cure?"

But the fact is, that there is far more pleasure in religion *now*, than there is in sin; and we are sure that it will *end* better. What will it avail any of

you an hundred years hence, that you were gay and merry; that you saw every fine sight, and indulged every sensual pleasure? but it will avail you, a thousand years hence, that you regard the one thing needful, and choose the good part. And let it be observed, that the person who can take no pleasure in religion, is not at all qualified for the joys of heaven, nor could he be happy there if he were admitted. If you can take no pleasure in the things of God; in singing his praises; in conversing with his people; in observing the Sabbath; what would you do in heaven, where the delights are not carnal, such as you love; but wholly spiritual, such as you hate? Does not this convince you that something is wrong? that your state and disposition is not what it should be? "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."—It is regeneration that makes the important change in a person's views and taste, for that "which is born of the flesh is flesh," and therefore can relish only carnal things; but "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit," and therefore enjoys spiritual pleasures. O look up to God in earnest prayer, that you may experience this blessed change. Then will sin be the object of your hatred, and holiness that of your delight. Depend upon it you will be no loser by religion. Godliness is profitable to all things, "having the promise of this life and of that to come." What can you wish more? While your eternal happiness is secured, you will enjoy "a conscience void of offence towards God and man." Your way will be directed, your crosses sanctified, and your earthly comforts doubled. "O taste and see that the Lord is good."

Come, we that love the Lord,
And let our joys be known;
Join in a song with sweet accord,
And thus surround the throne.

The sorrows of the mind
Be banished from the place!
Religion never was design'd
To make our pleasures less.

Let those refuse to sing
That never knew our God,
But fav'rites of the heavenly King
May speak their joys abroad.

The men of grace have found
Glory begun below,
Celestial fruits on earthly ground
From faith and hope may grow.

The hill of Sion yields
A thousand sacred sweets,
Before we reach the heavenly fields,
Or walk the golden streets.

Then let our songs abound,
And every eye be dry;
We're marching thro' Immanuel's ground
To fairer worlds on high.

WATTS.

SERMON XXVI.

MATT. XVI. 26.

For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

IN all the Bible I know not a more weighty sentence than this. Were it duly considered, what a religious world would this become! The disregard of it makes the world that scene of mischief and folly which you behold. To give these words their full force, remember whose they are. They are the words of Jesus Christ, the incarnate God, the Creator of the world. And who so able to determine that the soul is worth more than the world, as he who made them both? He made the soul, and he made the world; yea, the price he paid for the redemption of the soul was his own precious blood. Surely then he knew the value of the soul! Regard these words, my friends, as full of truth, and truth of the greatest importance to yourselves. And, Oh, that he who first spoke them to his disciples, may now speak them to our hearts by his Holy Spirit!

In the text there are three things which require our attention.

I. Every man has a soul of inestimable value.

II. There is a possibility of a man's losing his soul; yes, there is great danger of it.

III. The whole world can make no amends for the loss of a soul.

I. Every man has a soul of inestimable value.

The nature of the human soul is, at present, but imperfectly known. God has not told us so much about it as to gratify our curiosity; but enough to assist our faith. From the Scriptures alone we learn any thing satisfactory concerning our souls, and there we find that the soul is a something distinct from the body; a thinking immortal substance; and capable of living

separately from the body in another world. This appears from Matt. x. 28. where our Lord says to his disciples—"Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." In like manner, we learn from the parable of Dives and Lazarus, that the soul of the former was tormented in hell, while his body lay buried on earth. Jesus Christ assured the penitent thief on the cross, that he should be with him that very day in Paradise, while, as we know, the body of Jesus was laid in the tomb. It is said of Judas, that he *went to his own place*, which certainly was hell; but his wretched carcass was on earth. St. Paul declares that death would be gain to him, because, when *absent from the body*, he should be *present with the Lord;* useful as he was in the church, and happy in that usefulness, he rather desired to die, to depart, *to be with Christ*, which was far better.

Now this immortal soul is of immense value; and its excellency may be argued from the following considerations:—

1. Its *origin;* it came immediately from God. Something peculiar is said of the formation of man, Gen. i. 26. "God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." Surely it was the soul of man, rather than his earthly body, that bore the divine resemblance.

2. Consider again the vast and noble powers of the soul. When these powers are assisted by learning, how does the philosopher survey, measure, and describe the heavenly bodies, or search into the hidden secrets of nature. And in an ordinary way, how skilfully does the mechanic form various instruments and engines for the common purposes of life. The farmer cultivates and improves the earth, and produces from it the foodful grain. Artificers, of various names, furnish us with useful and ornamental articles of clothes and furniture; while the scholar, like the industrious bee, collects the wisdom of all countries and ages. And what is far

better, the soul is capable, by divine grace, of knowing God, of being renewed in his holy image, of paying him cheerful service, and of enjoying him for ever in a better world.

3. Once more, consider the worth of the soul in the amazing *price* paid down for its *redemption.* "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold; but with the precious blood of Christ." 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.—Thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil, would not have sufficed; nothing but the blood of the Lamb of God could atone for sin:

> "The ransom was paid down; the fund of heav'n,
> Heaven's inexhausted fund,
> Amazing, and amaz'd, pour'd forth the price,
> All price beyond!"——

Surely the ransom-price of the soul bespeaks its infinite value. O let us learn to value our souls!

4. Consider again *the contention of heaven and hell* for the soul of man. Heaven from above invites us to come to God. Jesus Christ came down on purpose to shew us the way: yea, to be himself the way. The ministers of the Gospel, "watch for souls;" for this they study, and pray, and travail, and labour, that they may snatch perishing souls from the devouring flames. They are "instant in season and out of season," and are "all things to all men," that they may win some. Your serious relations, friends, and neighbours, long for your conversion; for this purpose they pray for you, speak to you, and lend you books. Yea, the angels of God are waiting around us, longing to be the messengers of good news to heaven, that sinners are repenting on earth.

On the other hand, it is the business of the devil to tempt and destroy the souls of men. As a subtle serpent he lies in wait to deceive, or as a roaring lion he roams about to destroy. Gladly would he seduce you into sin, by the love of pleasure; or get you to neglect salvation, by the love of business; or prejudice your

minds against the Gospel of life. What is the reason that preaching the Gospel is so much opposed, and that storms of persecution are raised against it? Satan is afraid of losing his prey. He knows that "the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation;" he would, therefore, keep men from hearing it, lest any should be "turned from darkness to light, and from the power of the devil to God." Learn then the worth of your souls from the strife there is between heaven and hell to obtain them; and say, whether you would wish to gladden angels or gratify devils.

5. Above all, consider the immense value of the soul, in that vast *eternity* of bliss or woe that awaits it. We are but in an embryo state at present, like a bird in the egg, or an infant in the womb. We shall soon die into eternity. We shall soon begin a state of being that will never end. The present life is merely the seed-time of eternity, and "what a man soweth that shall he also reap: he that soweth iniquity, shall reap vanity"—he shall meet with nothing but disappointment. "He that soweth to the flesh shall reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall reap life everlasting." Gal. vi. 8. Considering the endless duration of a soul, the happiness or misery of one saved or damned sinner, will be far greater than the temporal happiness or misery of all the inhabitants of England for a hundred years. Eternity stamps infinite value on the soul; and this is the reason of the comparison made in our text between one single soul and the whole world, and of the question proposed in it, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" The expression seems to allude to the custom of those countries which do not use money in their traffic, but exchange one article for another: now what can be exchanged for the soul? Can any thing be offered of equal value? Certainly not; for every thing in this world is temporal; but the soul of man is eternal. How dreadful then its loss! And this leads us to show,

II. That a man may lose his soul, and that he is in danger of so doing.

The soul of man cannot be lost *by ceasing to be*: for being immortal in its nature, that is impossible. And, oh, how gladly would a damned soul cease to be, if it were possible! But for a soul to be lost, is for it to be lost as to that happiness, here and hereafter, which is suited to its nature. It is to lose all the present pleasures of religion, "the consolation that is in Christ"—"the comfort of love"—"the peace that passeth all understanding," and "the joy of the Holy Ghost, which is unspeakable, and full of glory." Whatever Satan and wicked men affirm, we know assuredly that the truly religious man is the only happy man; and, therefore, he who lives without religion, lives without the true happiness of life: and though he may pretend to defy the danger that awaits him, yet conscience will sometimes speak, and in the midst of his sinful mirth will whisper in his ear—"What will all this profit if thy soul be lost at last?"

But, oh, who can tell the fearful import of that word *lost*, as it respects the future and eternal world! I remember a few years ago that a boy, who was sent upon some errand on a cold winter's evening, was overtaken with a dreadful storm, when the snow fell so thick, and drifted in such a manner, that he missed his way; and continuing several hours in that condition, was ready to perish. About midnight, a gentleman in the neighbourhood thought he heard a sound, but could not distinguish what it was, till, opening his window, he heard a human voice, at a great distance, pronouncing in a piteous tone—*Lost! lost! lost!* The poor boy, in some hope of help, kept crying out at intervals, *Lost! lost! lost!* Humanity led the gentleman to send persons diligently to seek for the lad, who was at length found and preserved. Happy for him that he perceived his danger, that he cried for help, and that his cry was heard! So will it be happy for us, if, sensible of the value of our souls, and their danger of perishing in hell,

we now cry for mercy and help to that dear and gracious "friend of sinners," that great and generous deliverer, who "came to seek and to save that which was *lost*." But if this be neglected, the soul will be lost indeed—lost without remedy, lost for ever. He who is now a *Saviour*, and will shortly be a *Judge*, has marked out the characters of the wicked, and has said —"These shall go into everlasting punishment." Awful words!—*Everlasting punishment!* He will say to them, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." In the fearful expectation of this, a gentleman some years since, who had been a member of parliament, and was esteemed an orator; but who had neglected his soul and religion, kept crying out on his dying bed, "Lost! lost! my soul is lost for ever!"

Now would we escape this dreadful end? Let us then seriously consider the *danger* of losing our souls. That there *is* danger of doing so, the word of God abundantly declares. Remember what Christ himself said, "Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the waythat leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat." Is there not danger then? Mark again what is said by the Psalmist, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." The word of God describes the very people. See a list of them in 1 Cor. vi. 9, and mark, whether any of you are there described. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? be not deceived: neither fornicators—nor adulterers—nor effeminate," that is, persons of lascivious tempers and *practices*, however private and alone—"nor Sodomites—nor thieves—nor covetous—nor drunkards—nor revilers—nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." Look over this black catalogue again, and if you find your name there, own it. Blush, and tremble to think what it must be to be shut out from the kingdom of God, and so lose your own soul; and then say, is it worth while

to lose your own soul for any of these sinful pleasures and practices? Will you, with your eyes open, exchange your soul for any of these things?

I find again, that all *impenitent* persons—all *unconverted* persons—all *unregenerate* persons, and all *neglecters of the Gospel*, will lose their own souls; and, that you may be sure of this, I will mention the chapter and verse where it is so declared. All *impenitent* people, Luke xiii. 3. "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish."—All *unconverted* people, Matt. xviii. 3. "Verily, I say unto you, except ye be converted, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."—All *unregenerate* people, John iii. 3. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." To these characters we add—All *neglecters of the Gospel*, Heb. ii. 3. "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" How can we in our consciences expect to avoid condemnation for our sins, if through carelessness and unbelief we despise and reject, or disregard, and do not embrace the Gospel which brings salvation to lost sinners? And again, 2 Cor. iv. 3. "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." The Gospel is a glorious light and leads sinners to salvation; but if it be *hid*, if it be covered and concealed from the minds of them that hear it, so that they cannot understand or receive it, because of the vail of ignorance and blindness that remains on their hearts, it is a proof of their being yet in the lost and ruined state into which they were plunged by the fall; and if they die in that state, they will be lost for ever. The apostle adds—"The god of this world," that is, the devil, whom the heathens worship, and carnal men obey, he "hath blinded the eyes of unbelievers, lest the light of the glorious gospel should enlighten them." If people who have the Gospel are lost, it is not the fault of the Gospel, but it is owing to men's wilful blindness, and the advantage the devil takes of it to keep them in the way to hell. *Mr. Flavel* illustrates this by the following comparison: "Let us

suppose a number of blind men on an island where there are many smooth paths, all leading to the top of a steep cliff, and these blind men going on continually in one or other of these paths which lead to the brink of ruin which they see not, it must needs follow, if they all move forward, the whole number will in a short time perish, the island be cleared, and its inhabitants lost in the bottom of the sea. This is the case of carnal men; they are now on this habitable globe, surrounded by the vast ocean of eternity: there are many paths leading to eternal misery, and every man turns to his own way; one to the way of drunkenness, another to the way of swearing, another to the way of lewdness, another to pride, another to covetousness, and so on. Forward they go, not once making a stand or thinking to what end it will bring them; till, at death, *over they go*, and we hear no more of them in this world. Thus one generation of sinners follows another; and they who come after applaud the miserable wretches that went before them. So hell fills; and the world empties its inhabitants daily into it.

Thus it is plain that the soul may be lost, and that there is great danger of it. Why else did the Son of God come down from heaven? Why else has he sent his Gospel to us? Why else do the ministers of Christ cry aloud and spare not? Why else do they warn every man, and teach every man, but that they may convince sinners of their danger, and prevent them from losing their own souls? We now proceed to show, that,

III. The whole world can make no amends for the loss of a soul.

"What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" It is not here supposed that it is in the power of any man to conquer or possess the whole world. No man ever yet *saw* all the world, and life would be too short for that purpose; much less is it possible for any one to possess the whole, or enjoy it; but it is to gain all the riches, honours, delights, and pleasures, that a man can pos-

sibly enjoy. It is to have every desire accomplished, every sense gratified. It is to have the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, indulged in the highest perfection. All that can please the palate; the luxuries of all countries collected on the table of the epicure; all the delightful charms of music; all the elegancies and conveniencies of a noble palace; all that can gratify the smell and the touch; all the pleasures of imagination, arising from grandeur, beauty, and novelty.—And, supposing all this obtained, (Solomon obtained it all,) what a *poor all* it proved!—"Vanity and vexation of spirit" was the total amount!

And is this the whole of that for which men risk their souls? Foolish barter! Wretched exchange! Was *Esau* wise, who sold his birth-right for a mess of pottage? Was *Judas* wise, who sold his master, and his own soul too, for thirty pieces of silver? Just as wise is the worldly man, who parts with heaven for the sordid and short-lived pleasures of earth. I remember reading of a woman, whose house was on fire. She was very active in removing her goods, but forgot her child, who was sleeping in the cradle. At length, she remembered the babe, and ran with earnest desire to save it. But it was now too late. The flames forbade her entrance. Judge of her agony of mind, when she exclaimed—"O my child, my child! I have saved my goods, but lost my child!" Just so it will be with many a poor sinner, who was all his life "careful and troubled about many things," while "the one thing needful" was forgot. What will it then avail for a man to say—"I got a good place, or a good trade, but lost my soul! I got a large fortune, but lost my soul! I got many friends, but God is my enemy! I lived in pleasure, but now pain is my everlasting portion! I clothed my body gaily, but my soul is naked before God!" Our Lord exposed this folly, in the parable of the worldly rich man, Luke xii. 16, &c. His wealth increased abundantly. He was about to enlarge his barns, and then he promised himself a long life of

idleness, luxury, and mirth; "But God said to him, Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" Here, for the sake of the body, the soul was forgot. While he was dreaming of years to come, death was at the door; and little did he think "that the next hour his friends would be scrambling for his estate, the worms for his body, and devils for his soul."

APPLICATION.

I. Is the soul so valuable? Then do we act as if we believed it so to be? Are our chief desires and endeavours for the body, or for the soul? It is true that the business of life, and the support of the body, require our daily care and labour. But God has placed no man in such a state as to allow no time for the care of the soul. One whole day in seven is, by his authority, appointed for the care of the soul and the worship of God. Every man, however busy, finds some time for meals, and rest, and conversation, on other days; and if the heart were set on God and heaven, as it ought to be, many a moment would be found for spiritual exercises, without hindrance to worldly business. Yea, a proper regard to true religion, and the blessing of God, procured by prayer, would render worldly business more easy, and more prosperous too. But, were it otherwise, remember the text, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Is it reasonable, think you, that this nobler part, the immortal soul, should have no share in your thoughts, and cares, and endeavours? Shall the brutal part of man engross all his affections? If it does, the event will be fatal. "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye, through the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

2. Is there danger of losing the soul? then beware: be on your guard; watch and pray, lest you should lose your souls. Remember that sin, and ignorance, and carelessness, and unbelief, will certainly ruin the soul. Though the flesh may plead for these things

and you may have the majority of the world on your side, yet God has said, "The end of these things is death."

But why should you lose your souls? Is there not a Saviour, and a great one? He came from heaven on purpose to save that which was lost. Do you ask, "What shall I do to be saved?" We reply, with the apostle Paul, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." There is no name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, but that of Jesus. He is the only deliverer from the wrath to come. Take care that you trust in nothing else. Make not your good works, as they are called, your dependence. Virtue and morality are excellent things, and promote the peace and welfare of society; but they are not saviours. He that trusts them leans on a broken reed, builds on the yielding sand, and will be woefully disappointed at last. By *grace* alone are sinners saved, through *faith;* and faith is the gift of God. Many who have some concern for their souls, perish through their ignorance of Christ. They think themselves moral and devout, and doubt not that God will accept them. But this is a ruinous mistake. Such moral persons are in as much danger as the most profane. This is the fatal stumbling-block of thousands; but know this, Christ alone can save your souls. He must be your wisdom, your righteousness, your sanctification, and redemption; your all in all. Fly then to him without delay. If you would not lose your soul, call upon him to save it. This is his office; He is the SAVIOUR. It is his delight; he waits to be gracious. His open arms are ready to receive the trembling sinner. "Turn ye to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope." Believe in him, and you are safe. You may then say, with St. Paul, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him;" namely, the immortal soul, with all its eternal concerns, *against that day*, the day of final judgment.

Finally. Can the whole world make no amends for the loss of a soul? then prize the world less, and the soul more. Learn to think of the world now, as you will think of it on a dying bed. "A dying man would give all the world for his soul; when in health he does not so much as think of it. Whilst he is able, he will do nothing at all! and he would fain do all, when he is no longer able to do any thing. What strange delusion is this! will mankind never recover from it after so many fatal examples?" Be moderate in your pursuit of the world. "Be diligent in business;" but take care to be "fervent in spirit" also. Time is short. Eternity is long. Live for eternity. Show your regard for your souls, by earnestness and diligence in all the means of grace. If you prize your souls, you will prize Sabbaths, and Bibles, and Sermons, and Prayers, and serious friends. *Redeem* then *the time.* "Hear the voice of God while it is called To-day; for this is the acceptable time; this is the day of salvation. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure." Were religion painful and miserable; still, as necessary to eternal happiness, it would be your wisdom to be religious; but to be religious is to be happy now, and happy for ever. On the contrary, the wicked man is miserable now, and will be miserable for ever. So that the choice which is proposed to every man on this subject is: "Will you have a foretaste of heaven now, and then heaven for ever: or will you have a foretaste of hell now, and then hell for ever? "*Will you have two hells or two heavens?*"

END OF VOL. II.

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FOR THE USE OF

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BY GEORGE BURDER.

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SERMON XXVII.

1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25.

If all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.

IN these words we have an account of the power of the gospel in the days of the apostles. We see here what was the design and effect of the word of God in primitive times; and it should be our concern that the same gospel may be blessed in the same manner among ourselves. In those early days there were *miraculous gifts* in the church; for instance, ability to speak in a language which the preachers had never learned; and this was to enable them to address themselves to people of all nations. It was then reckoned very honourable to possess the *gift of tongues*, and some coveted it too much. St. Paul, in this chapter, shews that it was far more desirable to *prophesy* or *preach*; 'Follow after love,' saith he, 'and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy; for he that prophesieth, (or preacheth,) speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.' And, in our text, he mentions the blessed effects of preaching, in the conversion of a person to God. He supposes a case, which no doubt often happened: a Heathen, or other ignorant person, led by curiosity, happens to come into an assembly of Christians, in a house, or barn perhaps, wishing to see or hear something of this new religion: he listens to what one or another of the preachers drops, and the Spirit of

God opening his eyes and touching his heart, he is convinced that he is a sinner, he feels himself condemned, he is surprised to find the secret thoughts of his heart laid open; and, so struck with an awe of the Divine Majesty, he earnestly implores the mercy of God, and is convinced that God is, in a special manner, present with his people.

True religion is always the same. The gospel is always the 'power of God;' and when he is pleased to own and bless the preaching or reading of it, the same blessed effects are produced. Men are fully convinced of sin, and converted to God. The Lord grant that such may be the effect of his word among us at this time!

I. We may first observe, that *Preaching the gospel is an ordinance of God, and constantly used in the primitive church.* Our Saviour, when leaving this world, directed his disciples to 'go and teach all nations;' to 'go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;' he graciously promised to be with the preachers of it, *even to the end of the world;* and added this solemn sanction—'He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.' Thus it appears that believing in Christ is necessary to salvation; and preaching the gospel is generally necessary to believing; for 'how shall they call upon him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?' Despised as preaching the gospel was at first, and still is by many, 'it hath pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.' Mark xvi. 16. Rom. x. 14. 1 Cor. i. 21. A portion of this blessing may be expected by all those who meet together, at any time or place, for reading or hearing the Scriptures, or the explanation of them in preaching, with a view to their own edification or that of their neighbours. May we enjoy it now!

II. *Curiosity frequently led persons to the Chris-*

tian assemblies. The religion of Christ made a great stir in the world. The true knowledge of God was so lost in general, that wherever the gospel was first preached, it excited great attention; it seemed a new religion; it brought strange things to men's ears. Some were greatly prejudiced against it. Many false and malicious reports were spread, and when it was brought to a town, some would say—'The men that turn the world upside down are come here also.' Men who loved sin, and lived in sin, disliked the light of the gospel, because it discovered their evil deeds. And persons long used to superstition, error, and devil worship, were unwilling to forsake their old religion, as they called it. But when they saw miracles performed before their eyes; when they saw numbers of sick people healed with a word or a touch; when they saw some of their neighbours forsake the altars of their idols, and become moral and lovely in their conduct, they were forced to stop and consider how these things could be, and some of them would of course go and hear for themselves. Our text supposes such a thing; 'If there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned'—an unbeliever—an infidel—or an ignorant person, one unacquainted with Christ and salvation, God often over-ruled this kind of curiosity for good. *Zaccheus*, a rich publican, wished much to see Christ when he passed through Jericho. He only wanted to gratify his curiosity in seeing a man who was so much talked of; but Christ in mercy called and converted him. It is good to be near Christ; he often meets with those who are 'in the way,' and 'is found by those who sought him not.' And it is happy for many that they did not suffer their own prejudices, or the fear of man, to prevent their going among serious persons, to hear and judge for themselves.

III. We observe further, that *primitive preaching had a tendency to convince men of their being sinners, in a state of guilt and danger.*

It was a principal part of the work of the pro-

phets of old, to cry aloud and testify against the sins of the people. John the Baptist preached repentance. So did our Lord himself. And he commanded that 'repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations'—*repentance*, in order to *remission*. As 'the whole need not the physician, but the sick;' as the disease must be felt, before the remedy can be desired; so must all men know the diseased and dangerous state of their souls, before they can believe in Christ 'to the saving of their souls.' Accordingly, we find St. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, charging sin upon the people of Jerusalem; the effect of which was, 'they were pierced to the heart,' and said to Peter and to the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' Thus in our text—the unbeliever, coming into the assembly, is convinced of *all*, of all the preachers; whoever preached, his doctrine had this tendency, to convince the man of sin. This is done, not merely by the power of the word, but by the power of the Holy Spirit, going along with the word. This is one of the great works of the Spirit, as our Saviour promised, John xvi. 8, 'When he is come he shall reprove, or CONVINCE the world of sin;' it is the same word as in the text; it signifies to convince by way of argument; to stop the mouth of the guilty person, convict him by his own conscience, and leave him without excuse.

The word of God is the chief mean of convincing people of sin. Reason and conscience alone are not sufficient. It is true, that those who 'have not a written law, or the Bible, are a law unto themselves; they shew the work of the law written in their hearts,' and their consciences accuse them when they do evil, and excuse them when they do well; but all this is done in a very weak and imperfect manner. The light of nature discovers *some* sins, but not *all*. It discovers scarcely any sins but those that hurt our neighbour. It discovers that there is a God, and that he should be worshipped; but it does not tell us how.

It does not tell us half the duties we owe to God, and therefore not half the sins we commit in not performing them. The light of nature does not shew us the *root* of sin, in our fallen nature. It does not shew us what *hearts* we have, 'deceitful and desperately wicked,' as they really are. It cannot show us that a lustful glance, or angry thought, or a covetous desire, is sinful, as our Lord, in his sermon on the Mount, declares them all to be. Besides, natural conscience is often stupid and unfaithful. When men live long in sin, the conscience becomes callous and unfeeling, 'seared, as it were, with an hot iron.' It is corrupt, like all the other powers of our souls, and is too weak and feeble, without superior aid, to convince us, in a due manner, of our sinful and dangerous condition.

THE LAW of God, contained in the ten commandments, is an instrument of mighty power in the hand of the Spirit, to convince men of sin. The *word* of the law, as printed in a book, or laid up in the memory, or fixed up in a church, are not of themselves sufficient for this purpose. No, they must be spiritually understood, and applied to the heart. St. Paul himself is a notable instance: 'I was alive,' saith he, 'without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.' He never was without *the words* of the law, he knew them from a child—but he was without the true knowledge of the law, as a *spiritual* law, requiring 'truth in the inward parts,' and condemning a sinful thought. It was the *tenth* commandment that opened his eyes, 'I had not known sin,' he saith, 'except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet;' by this he saw that a *desire* might be sinful; and seeing this he was convinced of sin. Where natural conscience sees *one* sin, the law shews a *thousand*. What natural conscience thought a *mole-hill*, the law shows to be a *mountain*. What natural conscience thought merely *not quite right*, the law shews to be a daring act of rebellion, and worthy of eternal death.

For besides being '*convinced* of all,' our text adds,

'he is *judged* of all;' he is tried, cast, and condemned. The consideration of his own sin is fixed on his mind: he cannot forget it, he cannot get rid of it. 'My sin is ever before me,' said the Psalmist. It is brought home to his conscience, as when Nathan said to David, 'Thou art the man!' The truly convinced sinner receives the sentence of death in himself. The law says, 'The soul that sinneth shall die.' The conscience says, 'I have sinned, and therefore I must die.' The law says, 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.' The conscience says, 'I have not continued in all things, therefore I am cursed.' It is the office of an enlightened conscience to anticipate the judgment of the great day; *now* to inspect the books that will be opened then, and so to judge ourselves that we may not be judged; so to condemn ourselves that we may not then be condemned. Most men have such a notion of the mercy of God, as to forget his justice and holiness; they fortify themselves in his mercy against his justice. But when a person is convinced of sin, he sees that God is holy and just; and he cannot but dread these terrible attributes, till he learns from the gospel how God is at once 'a just God and a Saviour; just, yet the justifier of the ungodly,' who believe in Jesus.

IV. Another observation we make on the text is, Preaching the word tends to disclose the secret workings of the heart, which were unobserved before. *And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest.*

Most men are so busied in worldly affairs, or stupified with worldly pleasures, that they are great strangers to themselves. They are also lulled asleep by the soft preaching of virtue, and morality, and sincere obedience, which they flatter themselves they have, so that they give themselves no trouble about religion. But the faithful preaching of God's word has a tendency to rouse men from this supineness. The word of God is a mirror that does not flatter. It shews men their hearts. It does not only tell men

what they *ought to be*, but shews them *what they are*. It leads them, from observing the streams of their evil actions, to trace them up to the fountain; the corrupt fountain of their fallen nature. Thus when David confesses his sin of adultery, in Psalm li. he acknowledges the spring of this horrid evil—'Behold I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.' So, when our Lord would convince Nicodemus that he *must* be born again, he shewed him, 'that what was born of the flesh, was flesh,' nothing more, nothing better; nothing but corruption and defilement, as Paul confesses, 'In my flesh there dwelleth no good thing:' and elsewhere, 'The carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither can it be.' So God declared of the old world—'Every imagination of man's heart is only evil continually.' Now a convinced sinner knows this, feels this; and thus the 'secrets of his heart are made manifest.' 'The Lord opens the root of bitterness; makes us smell the sink of sin; discovers the dunghill whence all these little serpents were bred; shews us the rotten core, as well as the worm-eaten skin; that the *nature* of the person *lies in wickedness*, as a mole in the earth, or a carcase in putrefaction, (1 John v. 19.) all under sin; no good spring in the heart; that there is a poison in the heart that taints every work of the hand, imagination, fancy, thoughts of the mind, and motions of the will. He brings a man from the chamber of outward sins to the closet of inward iniquities, till he arrives at the large room of NATURE; bids him see if he can find out one clean corner in the heart; and so conducts him to the *first sin of Adam*; makes him behold the first fountain whence all issued; and all little enough to make the proud heart stoop to God: this makes a man vile in his own eyes, so that he cannot look upon himself but with confusion, and an universal blush.' So speaks the excellent *Mr. Charnock*.

Persons who have not been used to hear the gospel, are frequently surprised, when they sit under a power-

ful ministry, to hear their own case and character so exactly described. It is not uncommon for them to charge their friends with having been to the ministers beforehand, to tell them their case. But this is no new thing. The remembrance of one sin leads to the remembrance of another. Sins that have been forgotten many years, have a kind of resurrection in the mind, so that they seem to surround and terrify the soul of an unawakened sinner. Thus it was with the woman of Samaria, who was converted by our Lord at the well; having detected her in the lewd course of life which she led, and being convinced that he was a prophet, she ran to call her neighbours, saying, 'Come, see a man who told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?' This is the proper and powerful effect of the word of God, which carries with it a mighty and convincing argument of its truth, as being the word of Him 'who searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins of the children of men.' The person who thus hears the word to purpose, 'knows the plague of his own heart.' He boasts no more of *a good heart*. He sees it is full of sin; which he no longer delights in, nor excuses. He sees its horrid evil, described in Scripture as *dirt, dung, plague, ulcers*, and putrefying *sores;* and seeing this in his own heart, he *loathes* himself, and cries with Job, 'Lord, I am vile! I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes!' And this leads us to another observation:

V. When a man is converted to God, he always begins to pray. The person in our text, already convinced of sin, 'falls down on his face and worships God.' A blind Pagan till now. If he worshipped before, it was Bacchus or Venus perhaps: or, the person may be a mere Heathenish Christian—one who never worships at all; for how many are there among us, who so entirely live *without God in the world*, that they never pray. But see the effect of God's word when carried to the heart. Regardless of the eye of man, he prostrates himself in the dust of abasement before his offended Maker and Judge.

This was the symptom of Paul's own conversion. "Behold he prayeth,' said Christ concerning him, as a proof that he was another man; a new man.

It is sad to think that so many people never pray. A short form of words, always the same, and always *unfelt*, is hypocritically offered by some in their beds, or when nearly asleep. By others this paltry ceremony is quite omitted. Some are ashamed to pray, lest they should be laughed at for it. Others are afraid, lest the Devil should appear to them. Others pretend they cannot get a private place to pray in. But let me ask such, Can you not get a private place to sin in? And if you loved prayer as you now love sin, you would not make this excuse. Behold here, a man so overpowered with a sense of the majesty and justice of God; so deeply affected with his danger as a sinner, and so eagerly desirous of his pardoning mercy, that he forgets he is surrounded by mortals, and falls down before his God with the publican's petition—'God be merciful to me a sinner!' So have I seen a condemned criminal at a human bar, when the fearful sentence of death has been pronounced, fall down on his knees, and, regardless of the gazing throng, implore the favour of the judge. So have I seen dying persons, expecting soon to appear before God, cry aloud for mercy, without considering who surrounded their beds. The place, or the posture of prayer, is of little consequence. It might disturb the public worship for persons to fall down and pray aloud in our assemblies; yet when a person is greatly affected, it will be difficult to conceal his emotions. He will lift up his heart, if not his voice, to God. And when he goes home, it will not be with the usual compliment, that he had heard a fine sermon, or a charming preacher; but retiring to some secret place, he will confess and lament his sins, and seek the pardon of them through the blood of Christ; while, conscious also of their loathsome defilement, he will earnestly crave the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit. One more observation remains.

VI. Converted persons drop all their prejudices against the people of God, and speak honourably of them. 'He will report that God is in you of a truth.' It is not unlikely that he said before, 'The Devil is in you.' Profane people indulge themselves in abusing religious persons. They are fond of calling them nick-names; they treat them with contempt and scorn; and sometimes abuse their persons, injure their property, hurt their character, or hinder their employment. Though religion be protected by the laws of the land, there are a thousand ways in which serious people are now persecuted, especially where the gospel is newly introduced into a place; and the poor, especially, are threatened by their superiors, that they shall be deprived of parish support, or other assistance, if they dare to judge for themselves, and attend the worship of God, where they think themselves profited. But these *persecutors* (for that is their true character, if they restrain men in their religion) ought to remember, that 'the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodlily committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him,' Jude 15; for the Lord considers what is done to his people as done to himself; and he says, 'it were better for a man to have a mill-stone hung about his neck, and be cast into the sea with it, than for him to offend or hurt one of the least of his disciples who believe in him.' Mark ix. 42.

But no sooner does a man come to himself, and see things as they are, than he forms a very different opinion of godly persons. They are no longer the objects of contempt and scorn. He sees that they are the excellent of the earth, the children of God, and heirs of eternal glory. He now says, 'God is in you of a truth.' Blessed truth! Jesus is 'Immanuel—God with us.' He is really and truly with his people when they meet to pray, and praise, and

hear his word. 'Lo! I am with you always,' saith he, 'even to the end of the world.' And again, 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.' Matt. xviii. 20. Blessed be Jesus for this precious promise, and blessed be his name for the fulfilment of it! We know he is with us, to observe, guide, assist, encourage, quicken, approve, and succeed us: yea, he comes first to bid us welcome. 'There am I.'

Now every converted person knows and feels this. He therefore says with Jacob—'How awful is this place; it is the house of God and the gate of heaven.' Observe, it is said, 'He will *report* that God is with you.' He will not be ashamed to tell the world so; and he will tell it to others, that they may come too. Just as some of our Lord's first disciples did. When *Andrew* was called by Christ, he went and called his brother *Peter;* and when *Philip* was called he invited *Nathanael;* and when *Nathanael* made some objections, and said, 'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?' Philip said, '*Come and see.*' In like manner, let all those who have felt the power of God under the word, invite their friends and neighbours to hear and judge for themselves.

APPLICATION.

And thus, my friends, we have seen a picture of primitive religion, such as prevailed in the first and best days of Christianity. And now let us enquire, Is our religion like this? Is it thus in our assemblies? Not in all. In some places what irreverence! laughing, ogling, sleeping! The preacher himself is perhaps in fault. Perhaps it is not the gospel that he preaches; or he is unaffected by it. He performs his duty as the school-boy his task. The people come expecting nothing; they go away having obtained nothing; and a pious spectator is constrained to reverse the text, and say, 'God is *not* here, of a truth.'—But where the gospel of Jesus is faithfully preached, the powerful effects, mentioned in the text,

will, by the blessing of God, more or less follow. If the doctrine tend 'to humble the sinner, to exalt the Saviour, and to promote holiness,' Jesus, by his Spirit, is there, and will set his seal to the heavenly truth. Both the law and the gospel, rightly dispensed, will tend to convince men of their lost and ruined state, to disclose the secret thoughts of the heart; and when this is done, to lead the sinner in earnest prayer to seek salvation by Jesus Christ. Has the word of God had this effect upon us? To know and feel ourselves miserable sinners is the first main point in religion. Without this we are blind to every thing else in Scripture. Without this we cannot pray sincerely, or do any thing in religion aright. Sin cannot be taken away till it be discovered; nor can we ever become what we ought to be till we know what we are. And when this is rightly known you see what follows. You see the convinced sinner prostrate on the ground. Has a sense of sin, an apprehension of its danger, and a hatred of its evil, brought us to our knees? If so, bless God for it. It is a good beginning. This is the finger of God. Wait upon God; and he who hath began the work will finish it.

What an evidence does this subject afford us of the truth and reality of the religion of Christ! Can any power but that which is divine, thus enlighten the mind, convince the conscience, terrify the soul, disclose the secrets of the heart, humble the proud rebel, and at once turn his affections into another channel? No, no. This is the work of God; and the Scriptures, by which he effects it, are the word of God, and he who believeth hath hereby 'a witness in himself,' that they are so. May these blessed truths, so useful and necessary to the conversion and salvation of souls, be every where proclaimed; and may these, their blessed effects, be every where produced: so shall multitudes be saved, and glory, glory, glory, be given to God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, world without end! Amen.

SERMON XXVIII.

JOHN i. 29.

Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

THERE is a vast curiosity in the mind of man, and the world abounds with objects to gratify it. The heavens, the earth, the sea, are full of wonders; and had not man sinned, he might always have read the book of nature with new delight, and have seen the glory of God in every line. But now, unhappy, fallen man turns his back upon God, while he surveys his works; and thinks every trifle better worth his notice than his Maker. In infancy, in youth, in middle life, in old age, a constant succession of vanities courts his attention, and he never thinks of beholding Christ till he dies, and appears before his awful tribunal.

Like John the Baptist, whose words these are, I would cry aloud, and say to my fellow-men, *Behold the Lamb of God!*—'Turn away your eyes from beholding vanities; and fix your attention on an object the most wonderful, the most pleasing, and the most useful, that the eyes of men or angels ever beheld.'

John was the harbinger of Christ, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord.' With strict austerity of manners and with great plainness of speech, he preached repentance—'Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' His honest labours were crowned with great success: and thousands of all descriptions

flocked from the cities and towns of Judea into the solitary wilderness, and, touched with compunction for their sins, applied to him, saying—'What must we do?' O that, in this our day, we could see such a general awakening!'

Thus the prophet proceeded, till Jesus Christ entered on the public stage of action, and came forth from the wilderness, where he had suffered all kinds of temptation. John, far from pretending to be the Messiah, directed his disciples to Jesus, saying, in the words of our text, *Behold the Lamb of God.*

In these words let us consider,

I. The great object presented to our view—*The Lamb of God;* and,

II. The *attention* we ought to pay him—*Behold the Lamb!*

I. The object set before us is *Jesus Christ*, here called the Lamb of God.

No doubt the expression alludes to the sacrifices of the Jews, in which consisted a principal part of their worship, as appointed of God himself. In this way God was worshipped from the beginning of the world. We find Abel, the son of Adam, offering up lambs, 'the firstlings of the flock, and of the fat thereof,' and this was a sacrifice well-pleasing to God, because it was offered up in faith. He believed the promise of a Saviour, which God had made to his father; he trusted in him, and was justified. It was for this purpose, in the first place, and not for amusement or profit, that Abel was 'a keeper of sheep:' and it was probably with the skins of lambs, killed for sacrifices by Adam and his wife, that the Lord God clothed them, instead of the covering of fig-leaves which they had made for themselves. Thus all believers in Jesus are clothed with his righteousness, while blind Pharisees vainly strive to hide the nakedness of their souls with their own 'filthy rags.' Thus God continued to be worshipped by his own people for four thousand years: even till, 'in the fulness of time, God sent forth his

own Son,' the very person that John here points out as the Lamb of God. And it is remarkable, that almost all nations, however they differed in other notions of religion, have retained something of sacrifices. The sons of Noah, wherever dispersed, carried with them this true notion, that 'without shedding of blood there was no remission:' and many of them mistaking the ancient promises of the great sacrifice of the Son of God, offered up a man as an atonement for their souls. This was practised in England before the Romans conquered it; and is practised still in the newly-discovered islands of the South Seas. May God hasten the time, when his glorious gospel shall be preached in all the world, and every Pagan sinner be directed to the Lamb of God, whose 'blood alone cleanseth from all sin!'

Various creatures were used in sacrifice by the law of Moses, but the principal and most constant victim was the *Lamb*. One was offered up at the temple every morning, and another every evening; and on the Sabbath-day, two in the morning and two in the evening. Once a year there was a remarkable ordinance—The Passover. It was first instituted when the children of Israel came out of Egypt. On that dreadful night, when God plagued the Egyptians by slaying their first-born, he ordered his own people to kill a lamb, and to sprinkle its blood upon the door-posts of their houses; and when the destroying angel went forth in the night to slay the Egyptians, he was commanded to *pass over* the houses so distinguished, and not hurt them: Once a year, ever after, they were to observe the same ceremony; and something like it they still observe. Now we are sure, from the New Testament, that all this was done to preach Christ unto them, and especially to us. St. Paul says, 1 Cor. v. 7, *Christ, our passover, is sacrificed for us.* The paschal lamb was without blemish; Christ was free from all sin, original or actual. The lamb must be of the first year: so Christ laid down his life in the prime of his

days. The lamb must be so slain that his blood might copiously flow: so the Redeemer shed his blood abundantly, by his agony, by the thorns, the scourge, the nails, and the spear; and yet, according to the type, not a bone of him was broken. In the temple service, the lamb was killed *before the whole assembly*; in like manner our Saviour suffered at the great festival, in view of the whole assembled nation. The blood of the lamb was sprinkled on the door-posts: the blood of Christ must be applied to the conscience, and is therefore called 'the blood of sprinkling.' That blood secured every family where it was sprinkled; the destroying angel was forbidden to hurt them; so the merits of Jesus screen every believer from the stroke of offended justice, and the bitter pains of eternal death. 'What,' saith the pious Hervey on this passage, 'What must have become of the Israelite, who, trusting to the uprightness of his heart, should neglect to make use of this *divinely-appointed* safeguard? He must inevitably have perished, with the death of his first-born. Equally certain, but infinitely more dreadful, will be *his condemnation*, who, before the omniscient Judge, shall presume to plead his own integrity, or confide in his repentance, and reject the atonement of the dying Jesus.'

The offering of sacrifices was the chief part of the religion of the Old Testament church. Sacrifices were to believers, then, nearly what sacraments are to believers now. Christ the Purifier, Christ the Peace-maker, was the substance of them. The animal offered must be clean, without spot or blemish; that it might signify the perfect purity of Christ, *as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.* The priest laid his hands upon the creature presented for an offering, while the sinner confessed his iniquity over the head of the sacrifice; and thus sin was typically transfetred to the victim; which was therefore called *sin* or *guilt.* Thus God 'laid upon his Son the iniquities of us all;' and he was made '*sin* for us, that

we might be made *righteousness* in him.' The slain sacrifices were burnt on the altar; so Christ was consumed by the flames of his love for his Father and his people, and at the same time by the flames of the divine wrath against sin, which he had undertaken to bear. There was a sweet-smelling savour of incense that ascended with the flames and smoke; and this was to signify how acceptable to God was the death of his Son, 'who gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour,' Ephes. v. 2. The *peace-offerings* were not entirely consumed, but the person who offered them might, and did, eat of them. A feast was frequently made of them, which was a kind of sacrament of communion; a type of that communion which believers in Christ now have, with him and with one another, in the sacred ordinance of the Lord's supper.

But Jesus Christ is called in our text, *The Lamb of* GOD. This name is given him by way of eminence, and to shew his *superiority* over every other sacrifice. He is *the Lamb of God*, as he was chosen, appointed, and prepared by God the Father, from all eternity. In common sacrifices every man chose his own lamb; here God only chose and appointed. 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son,' that he might be the great sacrifice. His infinite superiority also appears in that he was but *once* offered. Other sacrifices were repeated annually, monthly, yea, daily; this shewed their imperfection, and that they could not, by any virtue of their own, take away sin.—'But this man, after he had offered ONE sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God: for by ONE offering he hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified;' that is—he hath done all that was necessary for the pardon and complete acceptance with God of all those who believe in him, and who were set apart in the purpose of God for glory. Heb. x. 12—14

This is that peculiar excellence in the Lamb of

God, on account of which we are invited to behold him. Behold him, sinner! for he *taketh away sin.* The word *taketh away* signifies *he beareth away.* This denotes that sin is a *heavy burden;* and would to God this were seriously considered! 'Fools make a mock at sin;' they make light of it; they make a jest of it; but thereby they shew their folly. Let them think a moment, (if minds so light can think,) let them think—what it was that filled the world with 'mourning, lamentation, and woe!' what produced all the sorrows and sufferings that we see, or feel, or fear? Was it not sin, accursed sin? Let them consider what a burden it is to a guilty conscience, when once its evil is discovered and its effects dreaded; for though 'the spirit of a man may sustain his infirmity, a wounded spirit who can bear?' The Psalmist, a type of this sin-bearing Lamb, cries out, 'There is no soundness in my flesh, because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin; for mine iniquities are gone over mine head as a heavy burden; they are too heavy for me.' Ps. xxxviii. 3, 4. Life itself is a burden to a mind oppressed with the guilt of some particular sin, or of sin in general. This led Judas to suicide, and has led many others to the same fatal end. But this is the way to increase the burden, not to lose it; for damned souls in hell must for ever lie under the intolerable weight. There *the worm dieth not,* even the worm of a corroding conscience, always stung by remorse; *and the* furious *fire* of divine resentment *is never quenched.*

But, blessings for ever be ascribed to the dear Lamb of God! He bore our sins, and bore them away. In the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, where the sufferings of Christ are wonderfully described, it is said, ver. 6, 'The Lord laid upon him the iniquity of us all;' and St. Peter says, 1 Peter ii. 24, 'He himself bare our sins in his own body on the tree.' As our Surety, he made himself answerable for our sins, so that they were imputed to him; he

bore the punishment due to them, even the wrath and curse of God, which if he had not borne, must have sunk each of us into the pit of hell. And O, what did Christ endure when this heavy burden was laid upon him! Hear his groans in the garden, 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful, or very heavy, even unto death: Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me,'—let the season of my sufferings be shortened. See the bloody sweat that fell from him in the agony! This was the effect of the burden of our sins, which then were made 'to meet upon him.' There was a very remarkable type of this under the law, Levit. xvi. On the great day of atonement two goats were provided. One of them was killed for a sin-offering; on the other goat, 'Aaron shall lay both his hands, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited, and he shall let go the goat into the wilderness.' These goats signified Jesus Christ; the one signified Christ *dying*, the other Christ *living*; as Christ *dying* satisfied for our sins, so Christ as *living* justifies us from them: 'he died for our sins, and rose again for our justification.' As the living goat was to have the sins of the people laid upon him, and he was to carry them away with him into the wilderness, so God laid our iniquities on Christ, and he takes them away, as it were, into the land not inhabited, where they shall be heard of no more; and this is exactly what our text declares, and what God has elsewhere promised. 'Your sins and your iniquities will I remember no more—if they be sought for they shall not be found—as far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.'

Thus the *guilt* of them is for ever removed from true believers: and not only the *guilt*, when they

are justified, but the *power* of them is also taken away by sanctification. He who gave his dear Son *for* us, gives also his Holy Spirit *to* us. He will not suffer sin to rule. They are united to Christ by faith, and 'sanctified by the faith that is in him.' Yea, finally, he will remove sin altogether; its being, as well as its effects. 'The body of sin and death' shall be purified in the grave, and body and soul shall be eternally pure and happy with Jesus.

Further, to recommend to our notice this Lamb of God, the wide extent of his glorious work is mentioned in our text—'he taketh away the sin of the world.' By this expression we cannot understand that he takes away the guilt and power of sin from every man in the world, for, if so, none would be damned. Alas! we plainly see thousands from whom neither the guilt nor the power is taken away; we see thousands unconcerned about the removal of their sins; we see thousands who think they can take away their own sins; and thousands who despise the blood of Christ, and trample it under their infidel feet. But by the 'world,' and 'the whole world,' we are to understand the whole world of the elect; the whole world of believers; the 'redeemed of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation:' all, in every place, who believe in Jesus, without any distinction. And this expression was often used by our Lord and his apostles, because it was a fond notion of the Jews, that the Messiah was to come only to them; and even the believing Jews at first were offended that the gospel was preached to the Gentiles. It is also for the encouragement of all sorts of sinners, of the chief of sinners, that this general term is used. Those who know and feel that they have a world of sin, a world of guilt, lying upon them, may here find comfort—He taketh away the sin of the world. Yea, doubtless, there was a sufficiency in the blood of Christ to take away all the sins of the world, had it been so appointed. If all the whole world were to have been

actually saved, there would have been no other offering, no greater offering, nor any more suffering than Christ endured. But Christ had in view his *church*, his *people*, his *sheep*, all of whom shall hear his voice, believe, and be saved. Nevertheless, the universality of the phrase is a great encouragement to sinners who are seeking salvation; for no sinner, in all the world, let him be who he will, or what he will, shall be excluded from the benefit of Christ's death, if he come to him by faith. 'Him that cometh to me,' said he, 'I will in no wise cast out.'

II. We are now to consider what that attention is, which we are here called upon to pay to Christ, *Behold, behold* the Lamb of God!

When John spake these words, Jesus was in sight; Jesus was coming to him. John pointed to him with his finger; but he did not mean that his disciples should only look at him with their bodily eyes, but that they should become his disciples and followers, which they did; that they should view him by *faith*, as the promised Messiah; and admire, receive, and prize him as the Saviour of the world. *We* cannot now see Christ with our bodily eyes, but yet, by divine grace, we may look unto him by faith, and be saved.

Our *attention* to Christ is required by the gospel. Let us turn away our eyes from beholding worldly vanities. The eye is never satisfied with seeing them; it always craves something new. But here is the grandest object that ever eyes beheld. Do men eagerly desire to see extraordinary persons? Here is the most glorious person that ever was seen. The queen of Sheba came from a distant country to see Solomon; 'but a greater than Solomon is here.' When a *king* or an emperor appears in public, crowds are anxious to behold him. Here is the King of kings, the King of the world. At the assizes, every one wishes to see the judge. Here is the great *Judge* of quick and dead, from whose sacred lips each of us shall receive our sentence. *Generals* and *admi-*

rals, who have had great success in war, are commonly objects of peculiar regard. Here is the *Conqueror* of the world, of sin, of hell, who led captivity captive, and bought our freedom with his blood. Here is an *Orator,* whose words not only move the living, but raise the dead. Here is a *Physician,* who has cured millions of dying souls, and never failed in a single case. In a word, Behold your SAVIOUR!

It is the look of *faith* that is chiefly intended. *Faith* in Christ is described by various names, according to the various names of Christ. When Christ is represented as a *foundation,* then faith is *resting* upon him. If he be compared to *food,* then faith is *eating* and *drinking.* When he is called a *gift,* then faith is *receiving him.* If he is a *refuge,* faith is *flying* to him. When he is represented as *calling* sinners, then faith is *hearing* him and *coming* to him: and here, where Christ is represented as a glorious *object,* faith is *beholding* him.

It is represented in the same manner by our Lord himself, John iii. 14: 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.' When the Jews were dying by the bite of serpents, they were cured merely by looking at the brazen serpent; so, whoever is ready to perish in his sins, let him look to Jesus, and he shall be saved.

Looking is an act of the mind; it supposes some *knowledge* of Christ, which is elsewhere called *seeing the Son,* and joined with *believing on him.* It supposes a conviction of the need of Christ; looking to Jesus is the act of him who wants to be saved. It supposes that the soul *despairs* of finding help from any other quarter; it is looking *from* every thing else, in order to believe in him. It supposes a persuasion of his *ability* to save, to save to the uttermost; and it includes some humble degree of *hope,* that looking to him will not be in vain.

Those who thus behold Christ by faith will also behold him with *affection*. With what eyes, think you, did they look at Christ, who had been healed and helped by him; the sick, the blind, the lame, the dead, who had felt his miraculous power in their recovery? With eyes melting in tears of gratitude would they gaze on their kind Benefactor, their great Deliverer. O with what joy and love should saved sinners behold the dear Redeemer! Yea, it will be the heaven of heaven thus to behold him for ever.

APPLICATION.

And now, having considered what a great and glorious object Jesus Christ is, and what regard we ought to pay him, let us ask the question, Have we complied with this easy, pleasant, reasonable command in the text? Have we with *attention*, with *faith*, with *affection*, beheld this dear Lamb of God? Ah, sirs, are not some of your hearts fixed on very different objects; your worldly gain, the gaieties of the world, the base lusts of the flesh? Are not these your favourite objects? O consider this, you that forget God! What can all these do for you? Even now they satisfy not. But what will they do for you in a dying hour? O be persuaded to look to Jesus! How else will you look death in the face; how else will you dare to look the neglected Saviour in the face, when you see him on his throne of judgment? What will all the world think of you, when you shall be pointed out before them, and it shall be proclaimed—'Here is a man that never thought it worth his while to look at Jesus?' Will not all heaven say, 'Let him be damned? If he was not worth even a look, let him be banished from him for ever.' O sinner, if you would have Jesus look upon you *then*, look upon him *now;* and if you know not how to do it, pray him to teach you, and ask of him 'eye-salve that thou mayest see.'

Are any here, who wish that their sins may be taken away? Their sins are many, and lie heavy on

their consciences, and they can find no relief. 'Behold the Lamb of God;' he *only* taketh away sin. Perhaps you have been looking elsewhere. You have been looking to yourself, your own goodness, your honesty, your church-goings, prayer, and sacraments. Are these saviours? Were these appointed of God to take away sin? They are good things in their places, but very bad things to be put in the place of Christ. Away with them all in point of dependance, and for the purpose of acceptance. With holy Paul you must count them all loss and dung, that you may win Christ and be found in him. Look to nothing but Jesus, for only he taketh away the sin of the world.

And to you also, *Believer*, we will say, 'Behold the Lamb of God!' This must be your daily business as long as you live; and nothing can be so useful. Have you a hard heart? Look to him and it will melt. 'They shall look upon me whom they pierced, and mourn.' Are you cast down and full of fears?—'They looked to him and were enlightened, and their faces were not ashamed.' Say with Jonah in the whale's belly, 'I will look again.' Would you obtain genuine humility? A sight of Christ must effect it. Job and Isaiah got it by a view of the glory of Christ. Would you entertain a constant hatred of sin? Behold the Lamb of God bleeding for it on the cross. Would you be truly holy? Behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus, and you shall be transformed into the same image from glory to glory.—Would you be bold for God, and constant in his cause? Behold the patient Lamb of God, who has left us an example that we should walk in his steps. Thus, Christian, persist in looking to Jesus daily by faith; till death shall shift the scene, and change faith into sight. Then shall we see him as he is; no longer 'through a glass darkly, but face to face;' nor shall you evermore need the exhortation in the text, 'Behold the Lamb of God!'

SERMON XXIX.

Acts ix. 11.

Behold, he prayeth!

THE grace of God was never more gloriously displayed than in the conversion of St. Paul. Speaking of it himself, he says, 'The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant;' and 'in me Jesus Christ shewed forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.' The change that was wrought in him was so sudden and remarkable, that the disciples of Christ at Damascus were afraid it was not real. To remove their suspicions, our Lord assures Ananias, their minister, that he was certainly a changed man; *for, behold, he prayeth!* As if he had said, 'You need not be afraid of him now. He was a bad man, but now he is a new man. He breathed out threatenings and slaughter, but now he breatheth out prayers and supplications. *Behold he prayeth!*'

As St. Paul's praying is here mentioned by Jesus Christ as a proof of his conversion, we shall take occasion from these words, to shew, that

A praying person is a gracious person.

This important truth will appear with the stronger evidence, by considering the history of St. Paul's conversion, as recorded in this chapter.

Paul, originally called Saul, was the son of Jewish parents; but being born in the city of Tarsus, was entitled to the privileges of a Roman citizen. He was brought up to the business of a tent-maker; for it

was the laudable custom of the Jews, though rich, to teach their children some trade. He had, however, a good education, and was sent to Jerusalem, where he studied the Jewish religion under the care of Gamaliel, a learned doctor of the law. He also joined the sect of the Pharisees, who were in great esteem at that time for their apparent piety and zeal. But he unhappily imbibed their self-righteous notions, their bigotry, and their bitter hatred of Jesus Christ and his followers. Paul, probably, had opportunity to hear the discourses, and see the miracles of Jesus; but they made no saving impressions on his mind: on the contrary, he became the implacable enemy of his followers. With all his profession of religion, he was a proud man, depending upon his own goodness for salvation; and therefore not at all disposed to relish the humbling, self-denying religion of Christ, nor to join himself with the despised Nazarenes. Yea, such were his prejudices, that he became a 'blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious.'

The first we read of him in the book of the Acts is, that he assisted at the cruel murder of Stephen, the first Christian martyr; for he took care of the clothes of those who stoned him, and thereby shewed his approbation of the bloody deed. After this he was very active in the persecution. He made 'havoc of the church, entering into every house, and dragging away women as well as men, committed them to jail,' that they might be put to death. He 'imprisoned, beat, and punished,' all the believers he could find in any of the synagogues; and 'being exceedingly mad' against the Christians, he obliged many of them to take refuge from his fury, by flying to distant places. Not content with this, he applied to the high-priest for authority to extend his persecution to the city of Damascus, which was 160 miles off. On this cruel expedition he set out, 'breathing threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord.'

Who would ever have thought that this man should

become a Christian, a preacher, an apostle, and a martyr! Was there any thing in him that could entitle him to the favour of God. Some have supposed so, in order to lessen the free sovereign grace of God in his conversion. They tell us he was sincere in his way, had 'virtuous habits,' and therefore had a previous disposition to receive the gospel. Nothing can be more false. He tells us himself he was 'the chief of sinners;' he was 'in the flesh;'—he went about to establish his own righteousness, 'not submitting himself to the righteousness of God.' Surely here was nothing to recommend him to mercy: but every thing that might provoke the Almighty to destroy him for ever. 'But God's ways are not as man's ways, nor his thoughts as man's thoughts. Paul 'was a vessel of mercy;'—'separated from his mother's womb' in the counsels of God; but the call was deferred till a time, when the freeness, power, and riches of grace might appear with the brightest lustre.

Paul was now within sight of Damascus, enjoying the thoughts of his expected success; when, suddenly, in a moment, there appeared a light in the firmament, a dazzling brightness, far above that of the sun, which was then shining in its meridian splendour. It was not a flash of lightning; but a continued glory, composed of rays which surrounded the body of our Saviour, who condescended personally to appear for the calling of this atrocious sinner. At the sight of the prodigious splendour, Paul, and all his companions, 'fell to the earth,' dazzled and confounded. While prostrate on the ground, a voice full of awful majesty, pronounced these words—'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" It was Jesus who spake; but Paul knew him not; yet supposing it must be some glorious personage, he summoned up sufficient courage to say, 'Who art thou, Lord?' And he immediately replied, with a solemnity and endearment peculiar to himself, and which pierced the rebel's heart,—'I am Jesus (the Nazarene) whom

thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the goads.'

Observe here, that Jesus Christ accounts *himself* persecuted when his poor members are persecuted. Saul thought he was punishing only a despicable set of silly enthusiasts, who had forsaken the church, and espoused the cause of the crucified Jesus; but Christ takes up the cause, and lets him know, that he thought *himself* injured by the injuries done to his followers. Let this be a check to those thoughtless persons who disturb and oppose religious people in their devotions. You may be as much mistaken as Saul was; for aught you know, the people you despise may be dear to God. If their religion be wrong, it is none of your business to punish them for it. Leave that to God. *You* are not their judge. But if their religion be right,—what then are you doing? You are 'fighting against God,' and in so doing you are hurting yourself. For so our Lord adds, respecting Saul, 'It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks, or goads,' alluding to oxen urged on to labour by pricking them with goads; if, instead of quickening their pace, they kick against the instrument that wounded them, they only hurt themselves the more. Just so it is with wicked persecutors; their rage is as impotent as it is foolish; they cannot hinder the designs of God, but they may and will hurt their own souls.

The Saviour asks him WHY?—*Why* persecutest thou me? Could Saul give any good answer to this question? Can any persecutor give a good answer to it? And what answer wilt thou give, O wretched man to this question, when the glorious Jesus shall put it to thee at the judgment day? 'Sinner, why didst thou disturb, abuse, and injure my serious followers upon earth?' Alas! thou wilt be speechless. Ask thyself the question *now*, and thou wilt persecute no more.

How astonished must Saul be to find that it was JESUS who now spake to him from the heavenly glory!

'I am Jesus, the Nazarene'—he who was despised and rejected of men; he who was treated as a vile impostor, and put to a cruel shameful death. How must he be surprised to find that Jesus was still alive! that the account of his resurrection was actually true; consequently that he was really the Messiah, the King of the Jews, and the Saviour of the world! And observe, that Christ owns the name of scorn by which he was distinguished—*the Nazarene.* It was a name of contempt and reproach, and on that account affixed to his cross. But Jesus, in all his celestial glory; owns the name, 'I am Jesus, the Nazarene.' Let this teach us to take up the cross, and cheerfully bear a *nick-name* for his sake; yea, let us rejoice and be exceeding glad that we are 'counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.'

What could Saul now expect? Convinced of his enormous guilt, what could he expect but sudden 'destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power?' But the Lord had designs of mercy towards him, and towards thousands by him. The power of the Spirit of God accompanied this vision and these words, or he would have only been affrighted, not converted. We do not find that the soldiers who were with him were changed, though, no doubt, they were alarmed. If God were to speak to men in thunder and lightning and earthquake, by voices from heaven, or visions from the dead, this would not change the heart. No; nothing but grace will do this. But the heart of Saul was now subdued, and he discovers this by the first word he utters—Trembling and astonished, he said, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' Thus resigning himself into the hands of Jesus, he obtained forgiveness. He is then directed to go unto Damascus, when he should receive further instruction. Then he arose from the earth, and was led by the hand, for he had lost his sight, into the city; where he continued blind for three days, and did neither eat nor drink; spending, probably, the whole time in serious meditation and fervent prayer.

At the end of three days, the Lord pitying the sorrows of this afflicted man, appeared to a disciple in the city, named Ananias, and directed him to go into 'Straight Street,' and enquire at the house of a person named 'Judas,' for one called 'Saul of Tarsus,' adding the words of our text—'Behold, he prayeth!' Ananias was still afraid to go; and therefore said, 'Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem, and here he hath authority from the chief priests, to bind all that call upon thy name.' But the objection was over-ruled. Ananias went. By his means, Saul was instantly delivered from his blindness, filled with the Holy Ghost, was baptized, and having received meat, was strengthened. Afterwards, as we all know, 'he preached the faith which he once destroyed,' and was, for many years, a most eminent and useful apostle of Christ, in spreading the knowledge of the gospel among many nations.

The conversion of Saul, afterwards called Paul, has been justly considered as affording a very strong argument for the truth of the Christian religion; and it is worth our while briefly to consider it in that view. If we believe what St. Paul tells us of his own conversion, we must of course believe all that the Bible says; for his doctrines perfectly agree with the rest of the scriptures; and declare that he received his doctrines, not from men, but from God: and we certainly have reason to believe what St. Paul says of his conversion, unless it could be proved, either that he was an *impostor*, and meant to deceive; or that he was a *weak man*, and so was deceived by others.

Now there is no reason to think that Paul was an *impostor*, and meant to deceive mankind. Impostors always seek themselves. They deceive to get *money*, or *power*, or *fame*, or *pleasure*. But Paul sought none of these: *not money*; he forsook the rich party of the Jews, to join the poor party of the Christians; for the first Christians were so poor in

general, that they were supported by the contributions of the few rich that were among them. St. Paul, himself, frequently worked with his own hands. No one ever suspected Paul of being rich.

He sought not *power*. Who could give it him? All the powers of the earth, whether Jewish or Heathen, were against the Christians, and were employed to crush them. Great numbers were persecuted and put to death, and St. Paul himself, at last.

He sought not *fame:* he became *infamous* in the esteem of the world; 'being defamed,' said he, 'we entreat; we are accounted the filth and offscouring of all things.' The name of a *Nazarene*, and afterwards that of a *Christian*, was contemptible and odious to the last degree.

Nor was it sensual *pleasure* he sought. No. He took up the cross when he took up Christianity. He knew nothing of carnal ease, or the delights of sense. His life was all activity and suffering. 'He was stoned, he was beaten with rods; twice he suffered shipwreck; he was in journeyings often, in perils of water, in perils of robbers, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in cold and nakedness.' All these things prove that St. Paul was no impostor; he certainly believed what he taught, and he had no bad design in teaching what he believed.

It is equally certain that St. Paul was not deceived by others. Who should deceive him? Not his former companions: they would have murdered him for the change. Not the poor timid Christians: they were afraid to receive him when changed. Who could form such a light in the heavens? Who could form such a sound in the air? Who could strike him and his numerous companions to the ground? Who could make Paul blind for three days? And when blind, who could restore him to sight? Indeed, there is nothing in Paul's character that can lead us to suspect that he was deceived. He was not a weak man, nor an enthusiast. And his whole conduct

for twenty years after his conversion, the temper he discovered, the doctrines he delivered, the apologies that he made, and the letters that he wrote, as fully prove that he was not a weak enthusiast, and so deceived, as they prove that he was no deceiver. And if Paul was neither *deceived* in what he believed, nor a *deceiver* in what he professed, it must follow undeniably, that the Christian system is not a delusion; but that it is the truth of God, the wisdom of God, and the power of God unto salvation. And let this be an answer to those who may try to cheat you of your faith and of your salvation, by pretending contradictions and blunders in the holy scriptures: they may tell you that this and that book was not written by the author whose name it bears, and that there is such and such a mistake in names and dates. Instead of regarding their little quibbles and cavilling objections, ask them to account for the conversion of St. Paul, upon any other principle than that of the truth of the Christian religion, and they will be confounded.

But to return to the design first proposed. We intended to show, 'that a praying person is a gracious person,' for Jesus Christ, in order to prove that Saul was converted, said, 'Behold, he prayeth!'

This observation made respecting him is very remarkable, if you consider that he had been a *Pharisee*. Now the Pharisees were so called because they separated themselves from others, professing to be more strict in all religious duties and ceremonies than their neighbours. 'They fasted twice a-week,' and 'they made *long prayers*;' they 'prayed standing in the synagogues,' and even 'in the corners of the streets;' they prayed over and over again, 'thinking to be heard for their much speaking.' Is it not strange then, that our Lord should say of Paul, *Behold he prayeth!* Was it a new thing for a Pharisee to pray!

There was certainly now something very different in his prayers, from what he had been used to. All

his former prayers are here reckoned for nothing; for now he prayeth, that is, he now begins to pray. It may be observed that the Pharisees were fond of making *public* their prayers; we nowhere read of their praying in *private*, and it is likely that they seldom did; for our Lord directs his disciples not to make their prayers in the streets, but to enter into their *closets* and pray. Probably, therefore, this was the first time in all his life that he ever prayed in secret. And there are now many people who would not be thought to neglect their prayers at church, who make no conscience of praying at home. But we cannot well suppose that person to be a real Christian who does not pray alone.

The prayer that Paul now offered was *sincere*. He had prayed often with his lips, now his *heart* prays. There is a great deal of sin committed by some people in their prayers. Like the hypocrites of old, 'they draw nigh to God with their mouths, and honour him with their lips; but their *heart* is far from him.' Christ charged the Pharisees with doing so. Matt. xv. 7, 8. Paul was one of this sort before his conversion; but now he drew near to God with his heart. Nothing deserves the name of Prayer unless it comes from the heart. It is not *words* that make prayer, it is *desires;* the felt desires of the heart, made sensible of its state and its wants. There are more lies told in our churches and meetings than at our markets. What sad hypocrisy is it, for a set of gay, proud, wanton people to cry—'Lord, have mercy upon us! Christ, have mercy upon us! Incline our hearts to keep these laws,' &c., while they neither feel the want of mercy, nor wish to obey the will of God.

Paul now began to pray in another respect. He prayed as a *humble sinner;* not as a *proud Pharisee*. When our Lord designed to expose the self-righteous pride of the Pharisees, he represented in a parable, these two sorts of men going to the temple to pray. And what did they differ in? The one boasted of his

goodness; the other, humbled, and almost broken-hearted, under a sense of his guilt, cries out 'God be merciful to me, a *sinner!*' No man prays in God's account, till he prays as a sinner, for pardoning mercy. It was during these three days' blindness of his body, that the eyes of his understanding were opened. It was then that he first began to know that the law was *spiritual.* He was 'without the law' before; but 'now the commandment came, sin revived, and he died.' Jesus saw him in his mournful state, and hastened to his relief. 'Go to him, Ananias, and heal this broken-hearted penitent, for under a sense of his sin, behold, he prayeth.'

Paul, we may suppose, was now acquainted with the gospel scheme. It was probably revealed to him during these three days. And now, he not only owns Jesus as the true Messiah, but knows the gracious purpose for which he came. 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.' This is a truth which Paul cordially received. Being well versed in the law about sacrifices, he clearly saw in them all, that Jesus Christ is the true 'Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.' He saw the reason of that humiliation of Jesus, and his death on the cross, that was before a stumbling-block to him; and now he determines to know nothing but Christ crucified, and to glory in nothing but the cross.' Before this, his dependance was upon his Jewish privileges—his birth, his circumcision, his zeal, his morality; but now all these things, which were *gain,* are accounted *loss,* yea, dung and dross,' for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, and an interest in him. How differently would such a man pray from what he did before! He now comes to Jesus, and to the Father, through him, for eternal life.

APPLICATION.

We have now taken a view of converting grace, in the example of the Apostle Paul. And let it be observed, that conversion is the same for substance, at all times, and in all persons. Circumstances may differ; but the work is the same. In all cases, it is the wonderful work of God; always undeserved, and always produces like effects. We are not, indeed, to expect a vision or a voice from heaven, as in this instance; but it is generally wrought by means of the word of Christ, sent home on the heart by the power of the Holy Spirit. See here the mighty hand of God! Is any thing too hard for the Lord; Here is grace indeed! free grace, sovereign grace, rich grace, abundant grace; and all this 'for a pattern to them who should hereafter believe.' Let none despair, when such a sinner as Saul is saved. The same grace, sinner, that changed his heart, can change thine; the same grace that pardoned his sins, can pardon thine; and it will be so too, if, like him, thy proud heart is brought down, and thou art enabled to say, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' This was his first petition; the dawn of eternal day in his soul. O that each of us might but say this from his heart! Can you follow me in these words? —'Lord, I give myself up to thee. I have done wickedly; but would do so no more. O, what wouldest thou have me to do? Let me be led into a right way for knowing and doing thy will; that I may testify my repentance, honour thy name, and obtain the forgiveness of my sins.' When Paul prayed thus, the merciful Saviour directed him to go into the city; and afterwards sent his Servant to instruct and comfort him. So will he say to thee, Arise, wait upon God; read and hear his word; and he shall visit thy soul with the light, power, and comfort of his great salvation.

As this text affords great encouragement to praying souls, and furnishes them with a plain and pleasing

evidence of their conversion; so it marks out, as distinctly, the woeful state of a prayerless person. Dost thou live without prayer, man, woman, child? —Thou art no Christian. Thou art an Atheist; yea, much worse than an Atheist. He believes no God, and therefore cannot pray to him. You say you believe in God, but never seek him. If you can live without prayer, it is a proof of a blind mind, and of a hard heart; it shows ingratitude to God, and insensibility of want. It proves thou art a stranger to faith, to repentance, to hope, to love, to every Christian grace; for as all these are exercised in true prayer, so the prayerless person proves he is destitute of them all. What is he then? An enemy to God, and a destroyer of his own soul. 'As the Lord liveth, there is but one step between thee and death.'—'Arise, O sleeper, and call upon thy God.' Turn or burn? Pray or perish!

Go on, praying Christian. 'The Lord never said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain.' He who said, 'Behold, he prayeth,' had observed his first breathings for mercy, He was heard, He was pardoned. He was saved. He is *praising* now. *Behold, he praiseth!* He has been praising Christ for 1700 years, and will do so to all eternity. Who would not pray now, seeing prayer shall be turned into praise, and issue in everlasting songs of joy and triumph?

SERMON XXX.

JOHN iii. 16.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

IN these words you have the sum of the whole gospel—Good news for sinners; glad tidings of great joy to all people. They are the words of Jesus Christ, in his admirable discourse with Nicodemus, a teacher and a ruler of the Jews. This man, being convinced by the miracles of Christ that he was 'a teacher come from God,' wished to have some conversation with him; but not having yet courage enough to declare for him openly, came to him privately by night. Our Lord directly began with him on the subject of the *new birth*. 'Nicodemus,' said he, 'except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God:' for, observe, the knowledge of the corruption of our nature, and of the necessity of being inwardly changed by grace, is the very first thing we must learn in religion. Nicodemus, with all his learning, was yet ignorant of this: but Christ insists upon it, that a man must be born again; and from the doctrine of the new birth, he passes on to that of faith in Christ, and salvation through faith. This he explains by a remarkable type or emblem of it, well known to the Jews:—'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have

eternal life.' Here Christ fortels his death upon the cross, and the benefit believers would derive from it. As the wounded Jew was healed by looking at the brazen serpent; so the perishing sinner is saved by looking at Christ crucified; and, that the sinner may not fear rejection, it is declared in our text, that the salvation of all who believe was the very thing that God designed in giving his Son. 'For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life:' It is in the free and eternal love of God that our salvation begins. The first of God's gifts is his love: the first gift of his love is his Son: the first gift of his Son is faith; and faith is the root of all other graces, the principle of the new life, and the key which shuts up hell, and opens the gate of heaven.

It is *the love of God* we are now to meditate upon. But O! who is equal to the subject? 'Can we by searching find out God—the love of God—God, who is love? Can we find out the love of God to perfection? It is as high as heaven;—what can we do? Deeper than hell;—what can we know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea. O that the love of God may now be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, that we may 'be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge!' In order to this, let us consider the following things:—

I. The Love of God—*God so loved the world.*

II. The Evidence of it—*that he gave his Son:* and,

III. The End or Design of it, *that whosoever believeth might be saved.*

First, Let us consider *the Love of God.* Consider *who* it is that loves, and *who* are the persons beloved. He, who loves is the great God, who was from everlasting infinitely happy in himself, and who needed not the aid of any creatures. He who

made all things out of nothing by the word of his power. He, 'with whom the nations are as a drop of the bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance; they are before him as nothing, yea, less than nothing, and vanity.' 'Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him!' But what is more wonderful is, that God, who is infinitely *holy*, and 'of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,' should ever love creatures like us, who are full of sin. He loved *the world*,—this world; not angels, but men; sinful men of all ages and countries. Not sinners of the Jews only, as some of them fondly dreamed. 'Christ,' saith the apostle John, 'is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only,' who are Jews, 'but for the sins of the whole world'—for all who shall hereafter believe on him, whether Jews or Gentiles, wheresoever they may be scattered throughout the whole world.

Nothing is so wonderful as the love of God to sinful man. When man was made at first, he was lower than the angels; how much lower is the *sinner* than the *man!* In some respects he is lower than the brutes; for 'he has the worst qualities of the brutes, without their best.' Yet, 'God hath remembered us in our low estate, for his mercy endureth for ever.' The love of creatures to one another, is generally founded on some real or supposed goodness or excellency; but there was nothing at all in man to excite the love of God; but, on the contrary, his hatred and wrath. 'The whole world lieth in wickedness,' or *in the wicked one*, the devil; under his rule and influence; full of ignorance, carnality, and enmity against God; in a state of actual rebellion against him, and without the least desire to know him, serve him, or enjoy him. Yet, hear O heavens! and be astonished, O earth! God loved this world of sinners. But, how much, no tongue can tell,—no heart conceive! The love is so matchless, so unlike any thing in human affairs, that our text makes no comparison in order to describe it;

it has no parallel or similitude among men; and, therefore, it is only said, 'God so loved the world, that he gave us his Son.' In most cases human love is expressed better by words than deeds; but the love of God is such, that it cannot be expressed at all by words; words are too weak; it is by actions that God commends his love towards us; and above all by this one,—the gift of his Son: and this is the *second* thing proposed,—

II. The EVIDENCE of God's love; 'he gave us his only-begotten Son.' Many are the gracious gifts of God to this world of sinners. The powers of our minds and bodies, the food we eat, the garments we wear, the health we enjoy; ten thousand thousand precious gifts call loudly upon us for daily praises. But great as these are, they are all lost in this one, like a drop of water in the sea. St. John, speaking of it, says, '*Herein* is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son:' as if he said, This is love indeed; compared with this nothing else deserves the name; and without it, what would all other gifts have proved?—what *do* they prove to wicked men, who live and die 'without Christ?' This is that gift of God, promised to our first parents in the garden; and which Abraham, David, Isaiah, all the patriarchs, and all the prophets, looked and longed for. This was 'THE MERCY promised to the fathers' (Luke i. 72.): this is *the mercy* that never could have been expected, never desired. It would never have entered into the hearts of men or angels to have thought of such a thing, as that God should give us his Son. And certainly it never could have been *deserved*. Man deserves nothing but hell. The common blessings of life are all forfeited by sin: and therefore we properly call our food, raiment, and health, *Mercies*, for so they are; but when we consider the greatness of that gift, they disappear like the brightest stars when the sun arises. It will be a matter of astonishment to all eternity that God should so love the world as to give us his Son.

The greatness of his love appears in the greatness of the gift; in the glory and excellency of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is here called *his only-begotten Son.* The angels are the sons of God by *creation;* and believers are sons of God by *adoption;* but Jesus Christ is the only-*begotten* Son of God. This is a name that we cannot fully explain; but it certainly signifies, that Jesus partakes of the same divine nature with his Father. 'That holy thing' which was born of the virgin, was called 'the Son of God.' Because we, whom he came to save, 'were partakers of flesh and blood, he likewise himself partook of the same nature.' He was truly man, 'flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone.' But he was also as truly God, God and man in one person; 'in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.' 'He is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person.' 'The WORD, who was made flesh and dwelt among us, was with God, and was God.' And, indeed, this is 'the great mystery of godliness, that God was manifested in the flesh.' 'Immanuel—God with us.' 'The LORD our righteousness.' And although the Son of God veiled his glory when on earth, and 'made himself of no reputation, and took upon himself the form of a servant,' yet his true followers 'beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.' 'His birth, though humble, was celebrated by a multitude of the heavenly host: he had a poor lodging; but a star lighted visitants to it from a far country. He had not such attendants as other kings have; but he was attended with far better—crowds of patients getting health of body and soul. He made the dumb to sing his praises, and the lame to leap for joy; the deaf to hear his wonders, and the blind to see his glory. And though he submitted to the shameful death of the cross, heaven and earth became mourners on the occasion; the sun was clad in black; and if men were unmoved, the earth trembled; there were few to rend their gar-

ments; but the rocks were not so insensible,—they rent their bowels. Death and the grave submitted to his power; the king of terrors lost his sting, and the Prince of Life triumphed over him.' This is the great and glorious person whom the Father freely gave from his bosom, 'God's own Son,' 'God's dear Son;' 'God's well-beloved Son;' and surely this was the greatest possible proof of his love. When God tried Abraham, he said to him, 'Take now thy *son*, thine *only* son, Isaac, whom thou *lovest*, and offer him up for a *burnt-offering*.' Was ever command so difficult, so trying? Every word is like a dagger to a parent's heart; but he obeys. He consults not with flesh and blood. He takes his son to the mountain; the altar is built; the wood laid in order; the youth is bound; the fatal knife uplifted: but it is enough. The design is answered. Abraham's faith is proved, 'even the faith that works by *love*.' 'Now I know, saith the Lord, 'that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy *son*, thine *only* son from me.' And may we not say, Now we know and are sure; we cannot admit a doubt of it; that God loves sinful man; seeing he withheld not his Son, his only-begotten Son, from us: he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all.' Verily, 'God is love!'

Abraham's was a rare instance. What he did was at God's command; and it was done in faith, that God would raise him again from the dead rather than the promise should fail. But what would induce a fond parent to part with a child, even for the sake of a friend, much less of an enemy? History tells, that during a dreadful famine in Germany, a poor family consisting of a man, his wife, and four children, were reduced to the last extremity, and on the very point of being starved to death. Knowing no other method of relief, the husband proposed, that one of the children should be sold, so that they might procure bread for them-

selves and the rest. To this painful proposal the wife at last reluctantly consents. It was now necessary to consider *which* of the four should be sold. The eldest was first mentioned; but neither of the parents could think of that; the dear child was their first-born,—they could not possibly part with him. The second child was then produced; but the poor mother objected. The fine boy was the very picture of his father, she could not spare him. The third, a charming girl, came next in turn; but the father made a similar objection: the dear child bore so strong a resemblance of her mother, she must not go. Well, only one remained. The youngest appears—but here both at once unite to say, 'We cannot part with him, this is our Benjamin, the darling child of our old age. No, we will rather perish altogether than part with any one of our dear children.' Let this little story illustrate, in some feeble degree, the wondrous love of God. God *so* loved the world, that he gave his *only*-begotten Son, his dearly beloved Son, to be our Saviour.

The greatness of this gift will still farther appear, if we consider *to what*, and *for what*, he was given. If he had taken our nature in its highest and best form—if he had become a Prince or an Emperor, it had been much. But how much more was it for him to come into our world in the lowest circumstances—to be born in a stable—to be laid in a manger—to be persecuted almost as soon as born—to be a poor man—so poor, that he had not a place where to lay his head—to be a despised man—'A worm and no man, a reproach of men, and despised of the people'—to be a 'man of sorrows' and especially 'to bear the contradiction of sinners against himself.'

It is a great hardship for a good man to be forced to spend but a few hours in bad company. A man who fears God can hardly endure to travel or sit a few hours with profane, lewd, or drunken people.

But Christ spent above thirty years in this wicked world. Good men 'sigh and cry for the abominations they behold; rivers of tears run down their eyes, because men keep not God's law.' How then must the holy heart of Jesus Christ have been grieved with the wicked actions and words of men, and with their *wicked thoughts,* all which were present to his mind continually!

But God's giving his Son includes still more. It includes giving him up into the hands of divine justice, and into the hands of wicked men, as the executioners thereof. 'He that spared not his own Son, delivered him up for us all.' So St. Peter spake of him. 'Him, being delivered by the determinate council and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.' The text shows to what purpose he was thus given up: it was that believers 'might not perish.' They deserved to perish—they had broken the law—they had incurred the curse; and must have perished, if no satisfaction had been made to the justice of God. But, behold the *Lamb of God;* provided, appointed, given of God. 'God sent his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.' 'He was made sin for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' O Christian! see the Son of God in his agony in the garden, sweating great drops of blood. See him standing as a criminal at Pilate's bar, falsely accused and basely treated. See him hanging on the accursed tree; his hands and feet nailed to the cross—derided by the cruel insulting mob, and deserted by his heavenly Father; and say now—God *so* loved the world! but, *how much* thou canst not say. The depth of Christ's sufferings, and the height of glory to which they raise thee, express this love in stronger terms than language knows.

There is yet another way in which God gives his Son—in the preaching of the gospel, and in the application of Christ to the believer's heart. As the

brazen serpent was exposed to view in the camp of Israel, so is Christ set before perishing sinners in the gospel. Herein God 'sets forth his Son'—and 'declares his righteousness.'—'brings near his righteousness,'—'reveals his righteousness,' that it may be received by faith, and become ours by believing. 'My Father,' said Christ, 'giveth you the true bread from heaven: for the bread of God is He who cometh down from heaven, and giveth life to the world,' John vi. 32. It is set before all men who hear the gospel; but it is the food only of those, who by faith receive it; and this leads to the last thing proposed, which is,

III. The END or DESIGN of the gift of love—'that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'

The salvation of believing sinners was the object which God had in view when he gave his Son. Supposing God would send his Son into the world, for what purpose might sinners have expected him? Might they not justly fear it would be to punish them for their sins? So it seems intimated in the next verse, 'For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.' The whole conduct of our Saviour upon earth agreed with this gracious design. He came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them—He came to seek and to save that which was lost. Every thing he did, and every thing he said, had this tendency.

This gracious design is expressed two ways. The first is, 'That they might not perish.' To *perish*, is for a man to die in his sins, under the curse of the law, under the wrath of God, and to be for ever miserable in hell. This is the proper 'wages of sin,' the real desert of every sinner; and we must know this to be our desert, before we can look to Jesus for salvation. Our Lord, in this passage, alludes to the brazen serpent in the wilderness. Now, for whom was this erected? Was it an object of curiosity to

be gazed at by a vain multitude? No; it was for the cure of the wounded Jews, who had been stung by the fiery serpents: whose blood had been poisoned by their venom, and who were ready to expire in agony. These men being ready to perish, would gladly comply with the divine command. How easy, how cheap, how pleasant a method of relief! *Look* and *live* was the heavenly mandate. Just so it is in the gospel of Christ: 'Look unto me,' saith Christ, 'and ye shall be saved.' If we receive the gospel as the testimony of God, we shall turn our eyes to no other method of relief but this. We shall renounce all notions of merit and works; we shall receive Jesus, and rest upon him alone for salvation.

But this is not all; salvation includes the possession of eternal life, as well as deliverance from death. 'I am come that they might have life, and might have it more abundantly,' said Christ. This includes the life of grace and the life of glory. Believers now live—they live to God—they live spiritually—they live by faith in the Son of God: Before conversion they were 'dead while they lived,'—Now they live indeed. Christ, by his Spirit, liveth in them; and they live in him;—Christ is now their life, and when he shall appear the second time, they shall also appear with him in glory. Grace is glory in the bud. He that believeth hath everlasting life (ver. 36): he has not only a title to it, but he has the *beginning, security, pledge, earnest,* and *fortaste* of it, which shall certainly issue in the full, complete, and everlasting enjoyment of it in heaven.

But there is a word of encouragement in our text which we must by no means forget, WHOSOEVER: 'God gave his Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish,' &c. Persons of every character; high and low, rich and poor, young and old; sinners of every degree, the greatest, vilest, and most abominable. Not only, may the more *moral man,*

who is also a sinner, look to Jesus and be saved; but that unhappy creature, a man or woman, who has gone to uncommon lengths in sin, who thinks there is not such another sinner out of hell, and who is even tempted to despair of mercy, perhaps tempted to self-murder on account of his peculiar and terrible guilt—*whosoever*—observe the word, *whosoever believeth;* here is a warrant for the vilest sinner upon earth to look to Jesus, to come to Jesus, to believe in Jesus; and the truth of God is pledged for it, that he shall not be 'cast out.' 'Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.' John vi. 37.

APPLICATION.

We have heard *great things* to-day. 'The angels desire to look into these things.' All the millions of the redeemed in glory are now looking into these things. And if we get to heaven, the love of God, the gift of his love, and the effect of this gift, will employ our ravished souls to all eternity. But say, my friends, how do they affect you? Or, are you totally unaffected by them? Does not this vain and wicked world engross your hearts, while the love of God, and the gift of Christ, are quite forgotten?

But, stop a moment, and consider. What are you doing? You are committing the greatest sin in the world. Unbelief is a damning sin; 'he that believeth not is condemned already; and this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.' So our Lord declares in this chapter. As the gift of Christ is the greatest proof that God could give of his love to the world, so, depend upon it, he will resent the contempt of it as the greatest crime. It is a crime greater than the devils in hell ever committed. They never had a Saviour to despise and reject. O beware of the fatal consequences! Death is approaching, and you must appear before Christ. But, how will you face him, when you know you

neglect him all your days? O, what would sinners give, in the great day, for an interest in Christ. Worlds! worlds! millions of worlds! would be counted cheap, could they purchase an interest in him. Well, sinner, as yet there is hope. Though you have neglected long, it is not too late yet. Turn now, even now, thy weeping eyes to the cross of Jesus. Behold God's dear Son, and the sinner's dear Saviour, with extended arms open to embrace thee. Hear him crying, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' O, let your heart reply, 'Behold I come unto thee, for thou art the Lord my God!'

And, O believer, humble believer in Jesus, what thinkest *thou* of Christ? Is he not precious to thee, the pearl of great price, the chief of ten thousand, and altogether lovely? What praise and love are due from thee to the Father, who gave his Son: to the Son, who gave himself; and to the Holy Spirit, who led thee to know and believe in him! Thou canst heartily say with St. Paul, '*Thanks be to God* for his UNSPEAKABLE GIFT!' This wonderful love of God in the gift of his Son, convinces us, in the most striking manner, of the immense value of the soul, and of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, seeing that a sinful soul could not be redeemed but at such a vast expense. What encouragement is here to him, who sees his sin *infinite*, that the blood of Christ, the blood of God, is of *infinite value* and efficacy! And what encouragement is here for the believer, who has received this greatest of gifts, that God will not withhold lesser gifts; for 'he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not, with him, freely give us all things.' Yes, 'all is ours,' if Christ is ours. 'He will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.'

Blessed be God, for Jesus Christ. Amen.

SERMON XXXI.

EXODUS XX. 8.

Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy.

THIS is the commandment of the Great God. It is one of *the ten words* spoken with divine majesty on Mount Sinai, and also written by the finger of God on tables of stone. There is no commandment of the ten of greater consequence than this: yet scarcely any one is so much disregarded. Well, therefore, may it begin with the word,—'Remember!' seeing that thoughtless mortals are so prone to forget it.

We are by no means to suppose that this law was given to the *Jews* only. It is not of a *ceremonial* nature, but *moral;* as all the ten are. The Sabbath was not first instituted when the law was given to Moses; it was only renewed. We read of the Sabbath in the second chapter of Genesis. It began as soon as the world began; for 'on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made: and God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it.' There can be no doubt that Adam, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and all the good men of old, observed the Sabbath; but when the descendants of Abraham became slaves in Egypt, it is probable that they could not observe it as they ought: but now, being delivered from bondage, the law was revived, and they are commanded to 'remember' the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy.

This law, then, is of perpetual obligation. And

if God saw it needful for Adam to keep it, even in Paradise, and before he sinned, how much more necessary is it for us to keep it? He had no hard work to do, from which he required rest; his heart was full of the love of God, and every day was like a Sabbath: but, as for us, the labours of our bodies, and the cares of our minds, are such as to make a weekly rest absolutely necessary. Besides, we are so full of sin, so surrounded by temptation, and so apt to forget God and our souls, that we greatly need a weekly Sabbath to call away our affections from the world, and direct them to things above.

It is true that we do not keep the self-same day as the Jews did. They kept the *seventh* day of the week; but we, the *first*. But the morality of the Sabbath does not consist in its being the *seventh day* of the week; but in its being the *seventh part* of our time. Besides, we have the same authority for keeping the *first* day, as they had for keeping the *seventh;* for Jesus Christ is 'Lord of the Sabbath;' and his apostles, who acted by his direction, and under the influence of his Spirit, constantly met for divine worship on the first day of the week, which was called 'The Lord's Day:' Acts xx. 7; Rev. i. 10. This was kept because it was the day of his resurrection; and as the Sabbath was first of all kept because the work of creation was finished, and renewed when God had finished the great work of redeeming his people from bondage; so the Christian Sabbath is kept on the day when the Lord arose from the dead, having finished the great work of redeeming souls from sin, death, and hell.—There is also great reason to think that the creation-Sabbath was changed when the Jews came out of Egypt, so that they kept their first Sabbath in the wilderness, on the sixth day of the week, accounting it the seventh from their coming out of Egypt; and that this continued to be the Jewish Sabbath, typical, as all their ordinances were; and that, upon the resurrection of Christ, the Sabbath reverted to

its original seventh day. Many learned men have been of this opinion; and, if they have not fully proved it, they have made it very probable. And this opinion seems to be countenanced by what St. Paul says, in his epistle to the Hebrews (ch. iv.); where, speaking of the Jews, he says, 'they entered not into the promised rest on account of their unbelief;' and that David, long after, speaks of 'another rest,' and of 'another day,' or season, in which he might be sought; he concludes that there remaineth a rest, or sabbatism, for the people of God; that is, a New Testament Sabbath, or Christian Sabbath, in which believers rest in the finished work of Christ, and enjoy a foretaste of the heavenly rest.

The word 'Remember' seems to intimate the necessity of preparing for it. We should remember, on the Saturday, that the Lord's day is at hand. People in trade prepare for the *market-day;* and why should not Christians get ready for the Sabbath, which is the market-day for their souls? It is a great sin that wages are paid, provisions bought, houses cleaned, perhaps linen washed on the Sunday morning. By these and other worldly employments, the best part of the day is lost, and perhaps only some of the last hours of it, if any at all, are devoted to God. We must 'remember' the Sabbath Day, and so prepare for it, as to be ready for the service of God, and devote the whole of the day to it.

In the further consideration of this text, we shall,

I. Show *how* the Sabbath is to be kept holy; and,

II. Give some reasons *why* it should be kept holy.

In keeping the Sabbath holy, we are to consider what *ought not* to be done, and what *ought* to be done.

What *ought not* to be done is expressed in these words: 'Thou shalt not do any work—thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates.' Six days are allowed for labour; but the seventh is a day of rest. Our worldly business, whatever it be, must be laid aside. The *whole* family, as

well as the master of it, must cease from worldly employments; and this commandment is directed particularly to masters of families, who are to take care that all persons under their roof keep the Sabbath.

We cannot suppose that only *work*, or manual labour, or trade, is here forbidden. Every thing is forbidden that is inconsistent with the design of the day, which is, to serve God, and edify our souls. Travelling, walking, or riding for mere pleasure; trifling visits, paying or receiving wages, frequenting public-houses, writing letters, settling accounts, reading books on ordinary subjects; yea, conversations of a worldly kind, are here forbidden. Many, who will not *work* on the Lord's Day, will *play*, and take their pleasure; but this is worse than working. St. Austin, long ago, observed, that 'it is better to *plough* on the Sabbath than to *dance*.'

The Sabbath is as much profaned by *idleness* as by business. Mere rest of body is the Sabbath of a beast, not of a man. We have immortal souls, and this is the day in which their eternal welfare is to be sought. We have the authority of God for these assertions (Isa. lviii. 13): 'If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath'—from trampling upon it, or from travelling on it, or from walking at large, as if under no restraint—'from doing thy pleasure on my holy day'—that is, from carnal pleasure, doing that which is agreeable to thy corrupt inclinations; 'and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, and honourable'—esteeming it above all other days, taking holy pleasure in the ways of God—'and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words'—not gratifying the flesh, nor indulging in trifling and impertinent conversation; *then*, saith the Lord, 'thou shalt delight thyself in the Lord,' &c.—thou shalt have the honour, profit, and pleasure of it; for God hath blessed this day.

But some will say—What! is nothing at all to be done on the Sabbath? I answer, *Works of* NECESSITY

and MERCY *are allowed;* they were so by the Jewish law. Our Saviour healed the sick on that day, and reproved the Pharisees for their severity and rigour in their observance of it; showing that, if it was lawful to feed or water a beast, it was certainly lawful to do good to men on that day; observing, also, that 'the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath:'—it was made for the good of man, both in body and soul; and therefore he is not to be prevented from that which is necessary to his comfortable support. Doubtless the getting of food, clothing ourselves decently, visiting the sick, bestowing alms, taking care of children, and many other things, are lawful on the Sabbath. But great care must be taken that this indulgence is not carried too far. That cannot be accounted a work of necessity or mercy which may be done on *Saturday*, or deferred till *Monday*. Many abuse the Sabbath by *journeys* to see their relations and friends, which might be taken on other days. Others *begin* or *finish* journeys on that day, to save their own time on the week-days. *Marriages* and *Funerals* are often celebrated on the Lord's day, which might as well be on another day; for hereby many persons are hindered from the proper duties of the Sabbath. Far the greater part of *Visits* made on this day are unlawful, as they occupy the time that ought to be spent either in public or private worship, and divert the mind from religious thoughts. Many vainly attempt to sanctify their journeys and visits by going to a place of worship, though they spend most of the day in travelling, feasting, or idle conversation; but this is, in many cases, only a refined hypocrisy. Nor is it much better for persons to wander miles from home to hear different preachers, if they can hear the true gospel at home. Even the beasts are not to be employed *unnecessarily*, though they may doubtless be used if they are conscientiously employed, to contribute to our serving God the better. *Feasting* our friends on the Lord's Day is a grievous

sin, as it employs too much time and care, and tends to make persons less fit for devotion. It is also very blameable to take up much time in *dress;* and still more so, to employ others in it. How sad a reflection is it, that 10,000 hair-dressers are perhaps employed every Sunday! Not to mention the vast number of coachmen, chaise-drivers, hostlers, publicans, and servants of all descriptions; thousands of whom are constantly debarred from the means of grace, and live and die like—heathens.

There are also very many who deceive themselves by attempting to compound matters with the blessed God; they will give him, *formally*, an hour or two of the day, and employ all the rest in a worldly manner. Where do we read in Scripture of *Canonical hours*, or find a distinction between *church-hours* and others? Does not the text say, 'Remember the Sabbath DAY, to keep it holy?' And by what arguments can it be proved that a Sabbath Day is shorter than another? Do other days consist of 12 or 24 hours, and this of 4, or 3, or 2? If you employ a labourer, and pay him for a day, will you be satisfied if he goes to work at 11 in the morning and leaves off at 1, and does no more all the day? Is not the true cause of a man's being satisfied with serving God so short a time, that he dislikes the service? And is not this an evidence of his being in a carnal state, and under the wrath of God? Let conscience answer it.

But this commandment not only forbids worldly employments on the Sabbath, it requires that the whole day be spent in a religious manner, especially in *the public or private exercises of God's worship.*

We should begin the day with *private prayer.* This is necessary to prepare our minds for public worship. We ought to *rise early*, in order that ourselves and families may be in time at the house of God. *Early*, said the Psalmist, *will I seek thee.* Those who are alive to God, would be ashamed of rising later on a Sabbath than on another day. Surely, the care of our soul demands as early

attention as the affairs of the body. The *whole* family, if possible, should attend the *morning* service. In some cases, perhaps, this cannot be: but the mere preparation of a hot dinner is a poor excuse for detaining even one servant at home. Those who fear God need not be told, that *family*, as well as private *prayer*, should be offered up before we go to public worship.

PUBLIC WORSHIP is most evidently an ordinance of God, of the greatest possible importance. From the beginning of the world, the true worshippers of God have assembled together on his day, for prayer, praise, and instruction. They were always 'glad, when invited to go up to the house of the Lord.' They accounted 'a day in his courts better than a thousand.' Our Saviour countenanced public worship by his own presence and example. 'The zeal of his Father's house ate him up.' He has commanded his gospel to be 'preached to all the world;' and has promised, that 'where two or three gather together in his name, he will be with them.'

To assemble ourselves with our fellow-Christians on the Lord's Day, is, therefore, the bounden duty of all; unless they mean to relinquish Christianity. And yet, it is deplorable to consider, that, perhaps, *three-fourths* of the people of England totally desert the house of God. We justly lament the avowed infidelity of a neighbouring country; but what shall we say of Britons, who call themselves Christians, and yet never profess their faith by public acts of homage to their God and Saviour? We know what excuses are made both by rich and poor; but we know also that these excuses will not be admitted by the great Judge of quick and dead. Some will say, 'We need not go to church, for we know as much as the minister can teach us.' If so, you are either very wise, or he is very ignorant. If you are so wise, much may be expected from you; but it is no part of your wisdom to neglect one of the main branches of your duty, in which you ought to seek the glory of God, the welfare of your soul, and the

good of your neighbour. Jesus Christ has appointed that his ministers should preach his gospel; and if it is their duty to *preach*, it is certainly the people's duty to *hear:* and if *you* may choose to absent yourself, why may not another? why may not all? What then becomes of Christ's ordinance; or where is your obedience to him as king in Zion? O remember what he has said concerning this very thing (Luke x. 16): 'He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me.' Yes, Sirs, whatever pretence may be made, the person who habitually neglects the worship of God in public, will be held guilty of despising Christ.

But it is not enough merely to attend. We should go with a serious mind, desirous of humbling ourselves before God for our sins, in the confession of the church; earnestly seeking pardon and grace in the petitions offered up; and cheerfully joining the praises and thanksgivings. Our attendance at a place of worship should not be, to see and be seen; to be observed by others, and to make our observations on them—as appears often to be the case by the conversation of persons when the service is over. Neither should we sit as critics and judges of the minister, merely to praise or blame; for it is plain, that many either know nothing at all of the sermon when they come away, or only pronounce it a good or bad one. Our business is to seek the teaching of Christ by his Spirit through the minister. 'Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth,' should be the language of every soul.

There are some who excuse themselves from public worship on account of their *mean clothing*. But is a man so poor that he cannot get better? Still let him wait upon God. 'Godliness hath the promise of this life, as well as of that to come.' Had the poor man served God better, perhaps he had not been so poor; certainly this is true, if idleness and extravagance occasioned his poverty. But it may be, it is the hand of God which has brought him so

low; his poverty is not his fault, but his affliction. Still let him seek and serve the Lord: wait upon God, who knows what things thou hast need of, and knows how to supply all thy wants. Yea, it is probable, that some of thy fellow-worshippers will pity thy case, and assist thee in getting employment or raiment. And as to the contempt of the proud, fear it not. Good men will pity thee. They must be bad indeed who will despise thee; regard them not.

There are others who excuse themselves from public worship by saying,—'We do not see that people who attend are better than others. We are as good as they.' What have you to do with others? To their own master they stand or fall. Perhaps they would do worse if they did not so; perhaps you would do better if you did. If they *abuse* the means of grace, will that excuse your *neglecting* them? But your business is with yourselves. Worship God.

But the worship of God in *public* is not the whole duty of the Sabbath; *Reading the Scriptures* at home is equally a necessary part of it. Indeed, they ought to be read daily; but as most persons have more time on the Lord's day, they should then be particularly studied. *Meditation*, or fixed affectionate thinking upon the things of God, with *Examination* of our heart and ways, is another branch of duty. Those who have families should take care that they all improve the day, both in public and private. The neglect of this is the sad cause of so much Sabbath-breaking. But heads of families may tremble to think, that they partake of the sins of children and servants, if they do not endeavour to restrain them. Parents should *catechise* their children; and inquire what they remember and understand of the *sermons* they hear. Above all, earnest *Prayer* should be offered up, and with the whole family; and that not only on the Sabbath evening, but on the morning also;' and, indeed, on the morning and evening of every day in the week.

II. Let us briefly consider the reasons, *Why* we should sanctify the Sabbath.

The authority of God is of itself a sufficient reason. God commands; let man obey. It is at his peril if he refuses. Surely we owe this obedience to him who made us, and in whom 'we live, and move, and have our being.' We are indebted to him for every breath we draw; and is it too much for us, in return for all his kindness, to separate one day in seven to his blessed service, that we may know him, love him, please him, and glorify him? Surely, this is 'our *reasonable* service.'

The goodness of God calls us to it. If God had not appointed a Sabbath, some cruel masters would have allowed their servants no rest from their toil; yea, covetous men would perhaps have destroyed themselves by their labour. But, by the goodness of God in his merciful appointment, the wearied body of the labourer is refreshed, and in the cheerful service of his God his mind is enlivened; and thus is he fitted for the duties of another week; while his immortal soul is prepared by divine grace for a happier world hereafter.

The Example of God is another argument. 'In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and rested the seventh day.' The whole work of creation was finished in six days; after which, nothing new was made. God then rested, 'not as one weary, but as one well pleased with the instances of his own goodness, and the manifestations of his own glory;' and this he did as an example to man. The patriarchs rested in the contemplation of God's works of creation. The Jews rested in the thankful remembrance of their redemption from Egypt; and Christian believers now rest in the finished work of Christ's redeeming love.

God's blessing this day is another reason why we should keep it holy. The Sabbath is a blessed day, for God hath blessed it. He expects us to bless him on it; and we may expect him to bless us. He

does bless it. From the beginning of the world until now, his people have found it good for them to wait upon God. His service is perfect freedom. His ways are full of pleasure. 'This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will be glad and rejoice therein.'

APPLICATION.

How awfully is the day of God profaned! It is a great sin: it is a national sin; for though the laws of England require us to obey this law of God, yet it is despised by all sorts of people. The great and rich set the example. They generally travel on the Lord's Day. Others of them have feasts; and some music and card parties: while others ride abroad to show their fine horses and carriages.

Tradesmen, casting off all regard for religion, form parties of pleasure, and resort to the country for carnal amusement. Inferior persons spend the day in idleness, drinking and lewdness. Thus all sorts of people conspire to cast contempt on the authority of God, to ruin their own souls, and bring down judgment on a wicked land. In some parts of the kingdom, the Sabbath seems almost forgotten; and though the church-bell rings, and the shops are shut, yet people buy and sell, drink and swear, proclaiming to all men, that the fear of God is not before their eyes. Magistrates and churchwardens take little or no care to prevent these evils, and so become partakers of other men's sins.

But stop and consider, What will be the end of these things? Will not God require it? He certainly will. Yea, he often shows his anger now against Sabbath-breaking. It is dreadful to consider, how many persons are drowned, or otherwise destroyed while committing this sin. There are ten times more accidents of this kind on the Lord's Day than on other days. Sabbath-breaking is the inlet of all other evils, and the certain road to ruin. Habits of vice, contracted by evil company on this day, are often their own punishment in this world. The

drunkard beggars his family, and destroys his constitution, and the thief commonly ends his days at the gallows. How many dying malefactors have warned others to avoid this sin, confessing that it was by breaking the Sabbath they were brought to such a dreadful end. O, Sirs, if you have the reason of men, if you have any fear of God, if you have any regard for your family or country, if you have any love to your precious souls,—'Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy.'

And O, be thankful for this privilege, you who enjoy it. Blessed be God, the Sabbath is not abolished in England, as it was in France. May God ever preserve to us the blessing of a Christian Sabbath, and enable us to employ it diligently! Let it be remembered, that 'bodily-service profiteth little;'—God says, 'My son, give me thine heart.' Let him be worshipped in spirit and in truth. Attendance on the means of grace will answer little purpose, unless we are brought by the influence of his Holy Spirit to know and feel our lost and ruined state as sinners, and are led to know Christ as revealed in the gospel, and to believe on him to the saving of our souls. 'Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.' Let us, therefore, 'take heed what we hear,' that it is the gospel of the free grace of God, and not a system of mere morality; which never converted a soul yet, nor ever will: and 'let us take heed how we hear, that it be seriously, and with a desire to be taught of God.' Let us 'mix faith with the word, that it may profit our souls.' Let us lay it up in our hearts, and practise it in our lives. Thus shall our Sabbaths on earth prepare our souls for the perfect knowledge, love, likeness, and enjoyment of God our Saviour, in the realms of everlasting happiness above. To which may God, of his infinite mercy in Christ, bring us all! Amen and Amen.

SERMON XXXII.

1 Cor. iii. 11.

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

A FOUNDATION is that part of a building which is first laid, and upon which all the rest stands: if the foundation of a building is bad, or gives way, the whole edifice is in danger; it is therefore of great importance that it be solid and durable. Now, the scriptures often compare spiritual things with natural things; and the church of God is here compared to a *house* or *temple*, 'an habitation of God through the Spirit;' or, as it is expressed (verse 9), 'Ye are God's building.' Of this building, Jesus Christ is the foundation. The whole Church of God, in all ages and in all places, rests entirely upon him. He is, to every true member of it, what a foundation is to a building,—he bears all the weight of it.

The occasion of these words was this:—There had been divisions among the Christians at Corinth: they admired one preacher, and despised another: one party was for Paul, another for Apollos. St. Paul reproves them for it; and shews them that all their ministers were but like workmen employed in the same building. Paul, who taught them the first principles of religion, laid the foundation; Apollos, and other preachers who followed him, built them up, or took further pains for their instruction; but as to the foundation it was already laid; and no teacher, taught of God, and sent by him, would

direct the people to any other way of salvation than through faith in Christ. 'For,' saith he, 'other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.' The great truth contained in these words is often mentioned in the scriptures. When St. Peter was brought before the Jewish rulers for preaching Christ, he told them boldly, that 'He was the STONE which they had set at nought;' and added, 'Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.' In like manner St. Paul, showing that God alone must have the glory of our salvation, says, that 'Christ Jesus is made to us Wisdom—and Righteousness—and Sanctification —and Redemption:' that is, '*Wisdom* to enlighten our ignorant minds—*Righteousness* to justify our guilty persons—*Sanctification* to renew our depraved natures—and *Redemption* to complete the whole, in the resurrection of our bodies.' Or, as more briefly expressed in another place, *Christ is all, and in all.*

There are four respects in which Christ may be said to be our foundation.

I. He is the foundation of all *saving knowledge.*

II. He is the foundation of *our acceptance with God.*

III. He is the foundation of *all holy obedience;* and,

IV. He is the foundation of all *true happiness,* both here and hereafter*.

I. Jesus Christ is the foundation of all *saving knowledge*—I mean of that knowledge which is necessary to salvation; for it is eternal life truly to know God the Father, and Christ the Saviour. Christ came to save us from our ignorance as well as from

* The plan, with some other parts of this sermon, are borrowed from Two Discourses on the same text, preached by the late Rev. W. Romaine, before the University of Oxford.

our sins. All men, as born into the world, are in a state of complete darkness and blindness as to the things of God. Reason, or the light of Nature, as it is called, leads no man to Christ. The wisest heathens were 'vain in their imagination, and their foolish heart was darkened.' Rom. i. Nor is this the case of the heathen only; '*the natural man*, that is, every man by nature, receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God—they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned' (1 Cor. ii. 14); and what is worse, the natural man hateth the light. As the thief and the adulterer dread the morning, so every sinner, being under the power of the prince of darkness, 'hateth the light, neither cometh he to the light, lest his evil deeds should be reproved.' John iii. 20. He shuns the light of God's word, lest he should see himself, and be filled with shame and painful conviction by the discovery of his sin. Now it was one principal end of Christ's coming from Heaven, to be the light of the world. He preached recovery of sight to the blind:—He opened the bodily eyes of some who were born blind, to shew that he could also open the eyes of the mind. He is to the soul of every believer, what the sun is to our bodily eyes. One great design of the gospel is, 'to open men's eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light.' Not that the word alone is sufficient for this purpose, unless accompanied by the power of the Spirit of God: 'He only, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, can shine into our minds,' so as to give us the true light.

Here let us stop a moment and enquire. What do *we* know of this? Is it so, that all men are born blind? Have we been sensible of this? We should think it a miserable thing to sit for several days, as the Egyptians once did, without the light of the sun. But our state by nature is far worse. It is a good thing to be sensible that this is our case: for, saith St. Paul, in the 18th verse of this chapter, 'If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him

become a fool that he may be wise;' that is, if he seem to have a large stock of worldly wisdom, let him renounce it all as insufficient to lead him into gospel truth: let him make Christ by his word and Spirit the foundation of all his wisdom; and then, patiently endure to be called a Fool by the world. O, let us be like that poor blind man, to whom Jesus said—'What wouldest thou that I should do unto thee? Lord,' said he, 'that I may receive my sight!' Happy man! he prayed not in vain. 'Immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.' Mark x. 52. So shall it be with us, if, like him, we cry, 'Jesus, have mercy on us!' With this desire let us come to the preaching of the gospel; and whenever we open our Bibles, let us pray, 'Lord open thou our eyes, that we may see wonderful things in thy law.' We are next to show, that,

II. Jesus Christ is the foundation of all *acceptance with God* the Father.

All men are sinners. This is generally confessed;—but till Christ enlighten the mind of a sinner, he is not affected by it;—He sees not the sinfulness of sin;—He sees not the horrid impurity of his heart;—He is not alarmed with the danger of his condition;—He is not aware that the holiness, justice and truth of God are against him. But this is really his case: the law of God requires perfect love and sinless obedience; or it puts the offender under the curse: for it is written 'Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them.' You must *continue*, without intermission, in *all things* (not keeping nine commandments, and breaking the tenth; and not keeping them all outwardly, and breaking them in thought) not only to purpose well, but to *do* them. And which of us has kept the law in this manner?—who can say that he never offended in thought, word, or deed? Certainly 'every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God,' who searcheth all hearts.

Now, what is the consequence? 'The wages of sin is death.' God hath passed the decree, 'The soul that sinneth shall die.' God is faithful and just to fulfil his decree; and he is almighty to execute his sentence. What then can be done? Is there no remedy? Must sinful men sink for ever under divine wrath? Two things must be done:—Full satisfaction must be made to the holiness and justice of God for past offences; and our sinful nature must be renewed and made holy. But can man do these? As soon might he create a new world. The natural man has neither the will, nor the power to renew and cleanse his nature. Who can say, 'I have made my heart clean,—I am pure from sin?' No man can say it truly. It is God's work. So David prayed, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me!' And until God create a clean heart, how can any thing clean proceed out of it? Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Who, in an impure nature, can do a pure action? Who under the curse of the law, under a sentence of condemnation, can perform a meritorious service? It is impossible. The scripture has declared, 'There is none righteous; no, not one;' and that 'by the deeds of the law, no flesh shall be justified.'

But what was impossible to man, is possible to God. Blessed be his name, he has, in infinite wisdom and love, devised a way for our acceptance—a way honourable to himself and easy for us. He has sent his own Son into our world, in the likeness of sinful flesh; and by making him sin for us, he has condemned sin in the flesh, that we may be made the righteousness of God in him. Jesus Christ was God and man in one person. By the divine and human natures united in him, whatever he did and suffered became truly divine and infinite. Our nature was wholly defiled and impure. Christ came in a nature perfectly pure and spotless. In this nature he obeyed the whole law; he continued in all things written in the law to do them. He also humbled himself

to suffer what we deserved to suffer for our disobedience. 'He redeemed us from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for us.' And thus, 'as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, even so, by the obedience of one, many are made righteous.' Being made perfect through obeying and suffering, he became the author of eternal salvation. He is now able to save sinners to the uttermost; he has the infinite merit of his obedience to atone for their disobedience; he has the infinite merit of his suffering to free them from suffering; he died to save them from the second death; he rose again, that they might arise to newness of life here in grace, and to life everlasting in glory; and he now ever lives to make intercession, and to act as Mediator between God and man; able and willing to plead the merit of his life and death for the acceptance of every sinner, who comes to God the Father through him.

Thus is Jesus Christ the foundation of all our acceptance with God. Thus St. Paul speaks (Eph. i. 6), 'To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us ACCEPTED IN THE BELOVED.' Christ is the beloved of the Father, 'his dear Son.' In him he is well pleased—pleased with his person—pleased with his atonement—it was a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour. And for his sake, he is well pleased with us, if we believe in him; he accepts us *in him*, and loves us, as his dear children. This is being saved by grace. This secures all the glory to God; and is free grace, which, as praiseworthy and glorious, is magnified by men and angels.

In this way only have sinners been saved from the beginning. The Lord God clothed Adam and Eve with the skins of those beasts they slew in sacrifice; and thus they were accepted through faith in the righteousness of the great sacrifice; and not by their own righteousness, denoted by the fig-leaves with which they clothed themselves. It was faith in the promised Lamb of God, that rendered Abel and his offering more acceptable than Cain and his offering.

Thus Abraham was justified, for he believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness. This righteousness, St. Paul says, 'was witnessed by the law and the prophets—even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe.'

And now, men and brethren, let it be asked—Is this *our* foundation? Whatever we look to, hope in, or depend upon, for acceptance with God, that is our foundation. But it highly concerns us to know whether it be this true and solid foundation, this 'Rock of Ages,' or some other, which will fail us in the day of trial. Whatever our foundation be, if it be not Christ, it is wrong; for our text says—'Other foundation can no man lay than Christ.'—Now, is any man building his hopes on his own works? Is he saying, 'I am not so great a sinner as some are—I do no harm—I do my best endeavours—I have a good heart—I say my prayers—I go to church—I am sorry for my sins—I am charitable to the poor, and so on?' Suffer me to ask—*Is this Christ?* All this is building on *self*. It discovers a total ignorance of our sinful state by nature, and a total ignorance of the gospel which reveals the righteousness of Christ. Besides, if we could work out a righteousness of our own, then there was no occasion for Jesus, and he died in vain. O let us beware of stumbling, as the Jews did, at this stumbling-stone (Rom. ix. 32); for whoever seeks acceptance by the works of the law, stumbles against this rock, instead of building on it. And so St. Peter speaks, 'Unto you, who believe, he is precious:'—he is speaking of Christ as the precious corner-stone of the church; but, he adds, 'he is a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient.' 1 Peter ii. 7, 8. On the contrary, he makes it the true character of all believers, that they 'come to Christ the living stone, and are built upon him, a spiritual house.' And this leads us in the next place to show, that,

III. Jesus Christ is the foundation of all *holy obedience.*

Many persons are afraid that the doctrine of faith is contrary to good works; and some have said—'If we are not to be saved by good works, what occasion is there for them?' We answer, 'Good works are the breath of faith.' A living man breathes; and a true faith works. St. James speaks of pretended, or dead faith, and says, 'As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.' Works are the proper fruit and evidence of faith, and that which doth not produce them is false. 'But the right faith, that which comes to Christ as the foundation, and builds alone on him, is always fruitful. And so far is it from being true, that faith is contrary to good works, that we affirm, there can be no good works without faith. The scripture saith, 'Without faith it is impossible to please God;' and it declares, that 'Faith worketh by love;' and again, that *it purifies the heart;* and again, that it *overcomes the world:* not that Faith does all this by its own power, but as it unites us to Christ, and derives virtue from him: and thus he is the foundation of all holy obedience.

Man, in his natural state, cannot perform any holy obedience. He wants both will and power, until his persón be accepted through Jesus Christ, and united to him by true and lively faith. The doctrine of the Church of England, on this point, is very clear and full. In the 13th Article she says, that 'Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God; forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Christ:—yea, rather for that they are not done, as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin.' What then becomes of the merit of works? And how absurd is it, as Bishop Beveridge observes, to think of 'being justified by good works, when we can do no good works till we are first justified?' Our fallen nature is wholly sinful. 'In

our flesh dwelleth no good thing;' and till we are in Christ, and so made new creatures, no good thing can dwell in us. 'He that believeth not is condemned already.' He is in the state of a rebel condemned to die, who cannot do any legal action till the attainder be removed. Besides, the dominion of sin in a natural man is absolute and universal. Sin reigns in his mortal body, he obeys it in the lusts thereof; he willingly yields his members as instruments of unrighteousness, uncleanness, and iniquity. He is the slave of the devil: led captive by him at his will. Satan says to him, Be drunk, be lewd, be profane; and the wretched slave submits, even though his poor body suffers for it; and he sees death and damnation before his eyes. This also the Church strongly affirms in her 10th Article. 'The condition of man after the fall of Adam, is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and good works to faith, and calling upon God: wherefore we have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing (going before) us, that we may have a good will, and working with us when we have that good will.' This is the doctrine of Scripture—'It is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure.' Phil. ii. 13.

There is a real, spiritual, though mysterious, union between Christ and believers; and it is expressed in Scripture by various images. For instance, Christ is the *head* of the body; believers are the members of it. Christ is the *vine;* believers are the branches. So he said to his disciples (John xv.) 'I am the vine, ye are the branches.' As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me (or separate from me) *ye can do nothing.* It is, therefore, evident that Christ must be the foundation of all holy obedience. It is not enough to be what the world calls a Virtuous Man—a

good Liver—a Moral Person. Acceptable obedience is that which is performed by a man IN Christ; one who, sensible of his sin and misery, has come to him by faith for wisdom, then for righteousness, and now for strength. Christ dwells in the heart of such a man; and whatever trial he has to bear, whatever duty he has to perform, whatever temptation he has to resist, he comes to Christ for strength, and 'out of his fulness he receives, and grace for grace'—grace in the believer, answerable, in some measure, to grace in the Saviour. He is conformed to Christ both in his death and resurrection; by the influence of the one he dies to sin; by that of the other, he lives to God.

Brethren, is it so with you? There are many who seem advocates for virtue and morality; and some, like the Pharisees, who abound in works of devotion; while, like them, they wash only the outside of the cup and platter: forgetting that the heart must first be purified, and the person accepted, before there can be any works performed pleasing and acceptable to God. We are not to imagine that our own good desires and endeavours will recommend us to God; that, when we have done all the good we can, we may venture to hope in his mercy, and trust Christ, as a make-weight to fill up our defects. No; exactly otherwise. We must first come to God, by Christ, as miserable sinners; receive from him the pardon of our sins and acceptance of our persons; and then seek the sanctification of our natures by the power of the Holy Spirit. In the last place,

IV. We are to show that Christ is the foundation *of all true happiness*, both here and hereafter.

Every man longs to be happy; but few are so. The reason is, men seek the living among the dead. It is not in the power of worldly things to make us happy. Sin has written *Vanity* on all the creatures, and filled the world with sorrow. Man, in his search for happiness, has turned his back on God, the fountain of true felicity: nor can he ever be happy till

he return to God. This can only be by Jesus Christ. Happiness must commence in reconciliation to God. It was once well said by a minister, who happened to be at an inn, where he heard some persons full of vain and noisy mirth—'Gentlemen (said he), if your sins are forgiven, you do well to be merry.' But what title has that man to happiness who is a child of wrath, and under the curse of the broken law? But when a sinner has fled for refuge to Christ, he is entitled to strong consolation. He that believeth hath everlasting life. Being justified by faith, he hath peace with God. *Be of good cheer*, said Christ to some, *your sins are forgiven you.* And it is the happiness of some now to know this assuredly. Having the Spirit of God as a spirit of conviction, humiliation, faith, prayer, and holiness, they have thereby the *seal* of God, the *witness* or *testimony* of God, that they have passed from death unto life. They taste that the Lord is gracious. They find solid delight in his word and ways. A day spent in his courts is better than a thousand; and they prefer an hour of communion with him to all the years they spent in vanity and sin.

This is the earnest of Heaven. Their happiness now is in having Christ with them. Their happiness hereafter shall consist in being with Christ, to behold, and to share his glory. An inheritance is reserved for them which is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away. Freed from this body of sin and death, delivered from the present evil world, they shall be for ever employed in admiring, adoring, and praising the riches of free, sovereign, and distinguishing grace. At present we are unable to form a just idea of heavenly glory; but this we know, as to true happiness, whether on earth or in heaven, Jesus Christ is all in all.

To conclude. We have now seen that Jesus Christ is the foundation of all true wisdom—of all acceptance with God—of all obedience, and of all real happiness. And is he so to *us?* Do we apply to him that we may become wise to salvation? Do we seek

and expect pardon and acceptance only through him? Do we derive grace and strength from him? And is he the source of our happiness? Important enquiries, brethren, worthy your serious attention! O, you that build for eternity, examine your foundation, for if it be not *Christ*, it will fail. The house will fall, and great will be the fall of it.

But some have believed through grace. Take encouragement from what God himself says, in commendation of this foundation (Isa. xxviii. 16.) 'Behold, I lay in Zion, for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation. He that believeth shall not make haste.'—'*A Stone:* Every thing else is sliding sand, is yielding air, is a breaking bubble.—*A tried stone:* Tried by millions of depraved and ruined creatures, who always found him able and willing to save to the uttermost.—*A corner-stone*, uniting Jews and Gentiles, and all believers, in one harmonious bond of brotherly love.—*A precious stone:* More precious than rubies; the pearl of great price; and the desire of all nations. *A sure foundation:* Such as no pressure can shake; such as will never fail those humble penitents who cast their burdens on the Lord. *Whosoever believeth*, though pressed with adversities, or surrounded by dangers, shall not make haste. He shall possess his soul in patience. And not only amidst the perilous changes of life, but even in the day of judgment, he shall stand with boldness. He shall *look up* to the grand Arbitrator—*look round*, on all the solemnity of his appearance—*look forward*, to the unalterable sentence—and neither feel anxiety, nor fear damnation.'

SERMON XXXIII.

I JOHN v. 7.

For there are three that bear record in heaven,—the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.

ALL religion supposes the worship of a God; and therefore, in all worship, the first thing to be considered is, *who* that God is; or what sort of a being is to be worshipped. The Heathens worshipped a great many gods; as many as thirty thousand have been mentioned: but all Christians admit that there is but ONE only, the living and true God. Now all the knowledge we have of God is from the Scriptures. If God had not been pleased to give us the Bible, we should to this day have been worshipping idols, as the former inhabitants of this country did, and as many millions of Pagans now do. Reason alone, never yet led any people to the right knowledge of God, nor ever will. The learned Greeks and the wise Romans knew no more of God than the savage Indians. The knowledge of God, which Noah and his sons had, was gradually lost and corrupted. But God made himself known in a particular manner to Abraham, and to his posterity the Jews; among whom the knowledge of the true God was preserved till the time of Christ; and now, by his gospel, this knowledge is given to us, and to all who receive the Scriptures as the word of God.

Now, the same Scriptures which assure us there is but *one* God, speak of him under the three names of *Father, Son* and *Holy Ghost;* and our text plainly

declares that *these three are one.* This doctrine is generally called the doctrine of the *Trinity*, which signifies *Tri-Unity*, or, three in one. This doctrine has been thought by most Christians to be very plainly revealed in the word of God; nevertheless there were some persons of old, and there are some now, who dispute or deny it; and these people are called *Arians*, or *Socinians;* and some of them now call themselves *Unitarians.* We ought to be much on our guard against those who would rob us of 'the faith once delivered to the saints,' and of which this is an eminent part. For you will please to observe, that those who deny the doctrine of the Trinity, seldom stop there; they generally deny also the atonement of Jesus Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit on the heart, and so leave us very little of the gospel to believe. Indeed, many who begin their apostacy in the denial of the Trinity, complete it in becoming downright Infidels and Atheists. As the right notion of God is connected with all true faith and holy practice, it is of great consequence for us to be well established in this doctrine. It shall therefore be our present business to prove, that

In the Unity of the Godhead, there are three divine Persons.

It may be proper to remark that, with respect to this doctrine, it is not necessary that we should be able fully to *explain* it, or shew how the three divine persons subsist. This is, and must be, a *mystery.* There are many people, in this Age of Reason, as they call it, who dislike and reject every thing mysterious; but this arises entirely from their pride. There are many mysteries in nature; we are mysteries to ourselves, we know little of the nature of our own bodies, and still less of our souls. Is it any wonder, then, that we should know little of God, or that the divine nature should be mysterious to us? Let us beware of pride, especially the pride of our understandings. This pride ruined the angels who fell. It ruined our first parents; and it will ruin us eternally, if it be

suffered to prevail. As we should never have known any thing of God but by the Bible, let us be content to take the Bible account of God, which is, indeed, his own account of himself. And let us remember what our Saviour said to his disciples when he discovered the workings of pride among them. Matt. xviii. 3. Having set a child in the midst of them, he said, 'Verily, I say unto you, Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.' A little child is obliged to take upon trust what his infant capacity cannot yet comprehend; and it is also the office of Christian faith to take God at his word.

I would also remark that, in our reception of this scripture doctrine, we are not bound to adopt the mode of expression used or enforced by any particular divines or churches. Some good men, in their attempts to explain this doctrine, have rather perplexed it. Some of our divines have said, that 'the Father is the fountain of Deity'—that he communicated his whole essence to the Son'—that the Son is eternally begotten of the Father,' and that he is 'very God *of* very God.' As these expressions are only private interpretations of a Bible-truth, we are at liberty to admit or reject them, as they appear to us to be scriptural or not.

Now let us proceed to a brief proof of the doctrine advanced, viz. *In the Unity of the Godhead there are three divine Persons.* By *Godhead*, we mean the divine nature. We maintain the *Unity* of the Godhead; that there is but one God; yet we assert, as our text does, that there are *Three* in the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and that these three are one.*

* Perhaps you will be told that this verse is not found in some ancient manuscripts of the New Testament, but has been added by the Trinitarians. But we are assured by men of the first learning and credibility, that it is found in the most ancient copies; and whoever examines will find that the sense of the chapter is not complete without it. But the truth of the doctrine does not depend on a single text, as we shall plainly prove.

There is but one God. It is impossible there should be more. Reason itself shews that there cannot be more than one being, who is *first*. God is the *first cause* of all being; and we cannot conceive of two or more *first* causes. God is also a self-sufficient being; he existed alone; he can do every thing of himself; he needs not the help of other beings. 'Now, if there were two such beings, they could do no more than one could do: if they could, then one could not be *self-sufficient* and *all-sufficient;* each of them could not be God, if they could want or receive any help from one another. There cannot, therefore, be two Gods; for if one is *all-sufficient*, the other would be needless and useless.' It is the great doctrine of scripture that there is one God.—Isa. xlv. 5. 'I am the LORD, and there is none else; there is no God beside me.'—Deut. vi. 4. 'Hear, O Israel; the LORD our God is one LORD.'—Mark xii. 32. 'There is one God; and there is none other but he.'—Jer. xxiii. 24. 'Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord.'—I Kings viii. 39. 'For thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men.' This is the God who alone ought to be worshipped. 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.'

The adversaries of this doctrine now call themselves *Unitarians*, by which they mean to intimate their belief of only one God, and insinuate that we who believe the Trinity, admit of more than one God. But we deny the charge. We maintain, as strongly as they, that there is only one God; and we think it perfectly consistent with this belief to acknowledge three persons in the Godhead. We allow that the word *persons* is not found in scripture, and may, perhaps, convey an idea somewhat too gross. But this is owing to the poverty of our language, which does not furnish us with a better term. And we think it justifiable, because *personal properties* and *personal acts* are ascribed to each of the divine three. But we contend not for the word, but the thing. It is enough

for us to say, with the text, There are THREE that bear record in heaven, the FATHER, the WORD, and the HOLY GHOST.

That there is a *plurality* in the Deity is evident from the old Testament. This, you know, was written in *Hebrew;* and the name which is generally translated by the English word *God,* is in the Hebrew *plural,* and signifies more than one. It is *'Elohim,* which is in the plural number, as *Gods* would be in English: and this word is often joined with the Hebrew word JEHOVAH, which is translated Lord; and whenever you find the word *Lord* in capital letters, thus (LORD) it means *Jehovah,* a name which signifies the essence of God, 'He who was, and is, and is to come.' Now there is a passage in Deut. vi. 4, where you have both these names, and which fully proves the doctrine of the Trinity. 'Hear, O Israel! The LORD our God is one LORD.' If the word *Lord* and the word *God* signified just the same, the passage would be nonsense; it would be only saying the Lord is Lord, or one is one; but the meaning is that JEHOVAH, our *Elohim,* our covenant God, Father, Son, and Spirit, is one Jehovah. He is one in essence, though three in person. The Jews are unwilling to own that this is the meaning of the name of God in Hebrew; but it is entirely owing to their hatred to Jesus Christ. If any are converted to Christianity, as some have been, they own it immediately*. Thus *John Xeres,* a converted Jew, about 70 years ago, when he published his reasons for becoming a Christian, says,—'The Christians confess Jesus to be God; and it is this that makes us look upon the gospels as books that overturn the very principles of religion, the truth of which is built upon this article, the *Unity of God.* In this argument lies the strength of what you object against the

* See an excellent treatise, entitled The Catholic Doctrine of a Trinity proved by above an hundred short and clear arguments in the words of Scripture, by the late Rev. Mr. Jones, Rector of Pluckley, &c. printed for Rivingtons.

Christian religion.' Then he undertakes to prove that the unity of God is not such as he once understood it to be, a unity of *Person*, but of *Essence*, under which more persons than one are comprehended; and the first proof he offers, is that of the name of *Elohim*. 'Why else,' says he, 'is that frequent mention of *God* by means of the plural number? as in Gen. i. 1, where the word *Elohim*, which is rendered *God*, is of the plural number, though annexed to a verb of the singular number, which demonstrates that there are several persons partaking of the same divine nature and essence.'

This *plurality* is restricted to a *Trinity* of persons, namely three, whose names we have in the text. And here observe, that the names, *Father*, *Word* or *Son*, *and Spirit*, are not intended to describe the manner in which the three divine persons *subsist;* but the manner in which they *act:* not what they are *in themselves* (that is not revealed) but what they are *to us*, according to their respective offices, which they have been pleased to assume in the redemption of man. And therefore, though one of the names of office may seem greater than the rest; yet this does not denote that the person who bears the name is greater than the other. The name of the *Father* may seem greater than that of the *Son*, or of the *Spirit*; and Christ speaks of the Father as greater than he; and the Spirit, as well as the Son, is 'sent;' but as these are names of *office*, and not of essence, they only describe the nature of the office assumed, which may be greater or less; but as to the essence, there is no difference nor inequality; but as it is expressed in the Athanasian Creed—'In this Trinity none is afore nor after other: none is greater or less than another; but the whole three persons are coeternal together, and co-equal. The Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all one: the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal.'

Our further proof of the Trinity shall be from the history of man's creation—the application of the name

of the Deity to each divine person distinctly—the institution of baptism—and the apostolical blessing.

In the history of man's creation, we find these words (Gen. i. 26.) 'And GOD said, Let us make man in OUR image, after our likeness.' Surely this expression denotes that there is a plurality of persons in the divine nature, or why should it be used? Some tell us it is only an accommodation to the mode of speaking used by kings, who in their public acts say *we* and *us*. But this is ridiculous; for kings had no existence before the creation of man. Besides, kings use this phrase out of modesty, or to signify the concurrence of their council; but 'Who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor?' Rom. xi. 34. In like manner we find the Lord God saying, after man had fallen (Gen. iii. 22) 'Behold, the man is become like ONE OF US.' Some think this was spoken *ironically*, in allusion to Satan's promise, when he tempted our first parents to eat of the forbidden tree, 'Ye shall be as gods,' &c. Others think it refers to the covenant, in which *one* of the divine persons had engaged to become *man*, in order to redeem man. Be this as it may, the expression plainly proves a plurality, such as is more plainly expressed (John i. 1) 'In the beginning was the WORD' (the very name used for Christ in the text) 'and the Word was with God, and the WORD was God.' But again,

The name of God is applied to each of the divine persons distinctly. That the *Father* is called *God* need not be proved. *Jesus Christ* is also called *God* in many places of Scripture. Thomas said to him (John xx. 28) 'My LORD and my GOD.' St. Paul says (Rom. ix. 5) 'He is over all, GOD blessed for ever.' St. John says (1 John v. 20) 'Jesus Christ is the TRUE GOD, and eternal life.' The Psalmist says, That the Israelites in the wilderness 'tempted and provoked THE MOST HIGH GOD;' and St. Paul, speaking of the same thing, says, 'They tempted Christ;' consequently, he is 'the Most High God.'

Psalm lxxviii. 56, and 1 Cor. x. 9. Isaiah had a vision, concerning which he says, 'Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.' Isaiah vi. 5. St. John, speaking of that vision, says, 'These things said Esaias, when he saw his (CHRIST'S) glory, and spake of him' (John xii. 41); and from whence it follows, that Jesus is the LORD OF HOSTS. And let it be carefully observed, that the name LORD, or JEHOVAH, which signifies the essence of God, is never, upon any occasion, given to a creature. Yet this name is given to Jesus Christ, as in the text last mentioned, and also in the following (Jer. xxiii. 6), 'This is the name whereby he shall be called, the LORD (that is JEHOVAH), our righteousness.' Now, who is the righteousness of believers? Every Christian knows, that 'Christ is made unto us—righteousness.' And in Isa. xliii. 11, 'I, even I am the Lord, and, besides me, there is no Saviour.' But we know who alone is the Saviour of the world, even 'our Lord, and Saviour, Jesus Christ.' But unless he were God as well as man, he could be no Saviour; for Jehovah says there is no Saviour besides himself.* Passing by many more texts for want of room, we shall mention but one more in proof of our Lord's divinity. Our Saviour has graciously promised his presence with all his people wherever they assemble together. See Matt. xviii. 20. 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.' Now how is it possible for Christ to be present in all the thousands of places where Christians are assembled, unless he be the true God?

In like manner we might shew that the peculiar

* If the reader wishes to see more proofs of this kind, let him consult the following places:—Isaiah viii. 13, 14, with 1 Peter ii. 7, 8; Isaiah xliv. 6, with Rev. xxii. 13; Luke i. 76, with Matt. xi. 10; 2 Cor. v. 19, John xiv. 11, Isaiah ix. 6, Rev. i. 8, 1 Kings viii. 39, with Rev. ii. 23. And as to those places in which Christ saith, 'The Father is greater than I,' &c. they are to be understood as referring to his human nature and office, or as the Creed expresses it, 'Inferior to the Father as touching his manhood.'

names of the Deity are given to the *Holy Spirit*, and that, therefore, he also is a Person, and a Divine Person. One, out of many, may be sufficient. St. Peter reproving Ananias for the lie he had told respecting his substance, saith (Acts v. 3), 'Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie unto the HOLY GHOST?' and, in the next verse, he adds,—'Thou hast not lied unto man, but unto GOD.' This is a most plain and undeniable proof that the Holy Ghost is God.*

The ordinance of *Christian baptism* affords another proof of the Trinity. In the baptism of our Lord himself, a voice from Heaven said, 'This is my beloved Son;' also, 'the Holy Spirit descended visibly' in the manner and form of a dove, 'lighting upon him.' Matt. iii. 16, 17. Here was the Trinity. The FATHER testifying to the SON, and the SPIRIT descending upon him. Hence, the primitive Christians used to say, to any who doubted the truth of this doctrine, 'Go to Jordan, and you will see the Trinity.' Plainer still is this truth from the form of words appointed to be used in Christian baptism:—'Baptizing them in the name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST.' This is an ordinance of initiation; it stands as it were at the threshold of Christianity; so that in taking upon us this distinguishing badge of the Christian profession, we avow this great doctrine. We are baptized into the *name* of each divine Person, that is by the *authority* of each, and into the *faith, worship,* and *profession,* of each, equally and alike, as the one God of the Christian religion. Hereby we profess the Trinity, that is, One God in three Persons, in opposition to all false gods and false worship; and thereby dedicate ourselves to them, according to their personal relations: to the *Father* as our Creator, and as reconciled in Christ; to *Christ* as our Redeemer, to deliver us from the guilt and power of sin; and to the

* Other proofs may be found in Acts xiii. 2—5; 2 Tim. iii. 16, compared with 2 Pet. i. 21; 1 Cor. iii. 16, with 1 Cor. vi. 19, 1 Cor. ii. 11, 14; Psalm cxxxix. 7.

Holy Spirit, to teach, comfort, and sanctify us. This is a kind of proof of the doctrine suited to the weakest capacity. Each of the sacred three is mentioned distinctly, and by name, which certainly implies a distinction of persons; yet they are all united in the same ordinance of baptism, which shews their equality and unity. So that all who would not renounce that sacred ordinance, may see in it a full, clear, and satisfactory proof of the Trinity.

Much the same may be said of the apostolical benediction (2 Cor. xiii. 14): 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all, Amen.' In these words St. Paul prayed for the Corinthians; and in the same words almost all Christian ministers pray for their people, at the close of every public service. It is a kind of prayer to each divine person singly, expressing a desire that the people may partake of the grace of *Christ*, who is 'full of grace,' through whose mediation we are reconciled to God—that they may also enjoy the love of *God*, namely, of God the Father, which is the source of our whole salvation, manifested in the gift of his Son, his Spirit, and his Word—and finally that they may partake of the *Holy Ghost*, as all real Christians do in his application to their souls of all the blessings of salvation, proceeding from the Father, and flowing to us through the Son. And thus are we continually reminded of this great truth, and led also to make a practical use of it, in seeking from each of the divine persons the peculiar blessings that each, in the economy of the covenant, has undertaken to bestow.

APPLICATION.

From what has been said, however briefly, it is sufficiently evident, that the Doctrine of the Trinity is a *scriptural* doctrine; and as such, we are bound to receive it, unless we renounce our Bibles. It is true that it is a sublime and a mysterious doctrine; yet there is nothing at all in it contrary to reason.

Some men make a great outcry against it. They tell us it is absolutely impossible *that three should be one,* and that the Trinitarians must believe there are *three Gods.* In answer to this we say we do not affirm that the *three* are *one,* in the same sense that they are three. They are *three,* in one respect; *one* in another;—we say there are *three in person; one in essence;*—we affirm, that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are not three Gods, but one God. We have abundantly proved from Scripture, that there are three to whom divine names are given, divine attributes ascribed, and divine offices assigned; and we affirm, with our text, and according to the whole tenor of Scripture, and the voice of reason too, that these three are one. And what is there in all this absurd or contradictory? Were we to affirm that three are one, in the same respect as they are three, it would, no doubt, be a contradiction in terms: but we say not that three persons are one person, or three Gods are one God; we only say that the three persons are one God. This is revealed, therefore we believe it; and though we cannot fully comprehend it, we think it becomes such weak and fallible creatures as ourselves, humbly to receive it with other truths, as the word of God, and not of man.

But it is by no means enough merely to assent to the doctrine; we ought to make a practical use of it. It is far from being a matter of speculation; it is a branch of our 'most holy faith.' We should be concerned, not to hold this, or any other truth, in unrighteousness: and no doctrine, however true and important, will avail us, without an experience of its sanctifying power on our hearts. Let us be concerned then, as perishing sinners, to apply to each of the divine persons: to the Father, for the pardon of our sins, through his infinite love and free mercy; to the Son, for an interest in his blood, righteousness, and intercession; and to the Holy Spirit, for his illuminating, sanctifying, quickening, and influencing comforts.

Let us adore and praise the eternal Three; the Father for his electing love, and the unspeakable gift of that love, the Lord Jesus Christ, his only-begotten Son. Let us adore and praise the dear Redeemer, ascribing blessing, and honour, and glory, and praise to him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood. Let us adore and praise the Holy Spirit for his gracious influences accompanying the word of truth, whereby we knew ourselves, and felt the power of the gospel to our salvation. Thus shall we resemble the blessed angels, who are incessantly praising the glorious Trinity, and crying Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.' (Rev. iv. 8.)

We shall close the whole with that excellent Collect used by the Church of England on Trinity Sunday:—

'Almighty and everlasting God, who hast given unto us thy servants grace, by the confession of a true faith, to acknowledge the glory of the eternal TRINITY, and in the power of the divine Majesty to worship the UNITY; we beseech thee that thou wouldest keep us steadfast in this faith, and evermore defend us from all adversities, who livest and reignest One God, world without end. Amen.'

SERMON XXXIV.

ROMANS i. 16.

I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.

IF we wisely consider the signs of the times, we are constrained to say, 'This is a day of rebuke and blasphemy.' Knowledge increases—arts and sciences flourish—commerce is extended—almost every thing is in a state of improvement; but what shall we say of religion? Alas! how many among us content themselves with the name and the shadow of it, while they deny its power! How many others, still more careless, neglect even the form of godliness; while others, grown bolder in sin, are weary of the gospel itself—dispute its truth, revile its power; and are seated in the chair of the Scorner; in a word, 'are ashamed of the Gospel of Christ.'

Not so that great and good man, whose words we have read. He was a bold and successful minister of the Gospel. He had preached it in many countries, but, hitherto, had no opportunity of preaching it at Rome; but hearing that there were Christians even there, he sends them this letter, expresses his love to their souls, and his earnest desire to come and preach Christ's gospel to them. It was a great and populous city, one of the greatest in the world, and he well knew that he should meet with much opposition, and, perhaps, be in danger of his life; yet, he says, 'I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ;' adding this good reason for his boldness, 'for it is the power of God unto salvation,' to every believer, whether Jew or

Gentile. Now, that it may, by the power of the Holy Spirit, be so to us, let us,

I. Take a general view of the *Nature* of the Gospel.

II. Consider the important *Design* and *Use* of it, —it is, 'the power of God to salvation;' and then,

III. Show that there is no reason why we should be *ashamed* of it, but rather that we ought to *glory* in it.

I. Let us take a general view of the *Nature* of the gospel. What is the Gospel? What do we mean by it? It may be feared that many, who are called Christians, would be at a loss for an answer to this plain question. Now there are several points of view in which we may behold the Gospel. It certainly contains a history of the most remarkable and important events, especially the incarnation of the Son of God, his holy and spotless life, his amazing miracles, his excellent sermons, his bloody passion and cruel death, his resurrection from the grave, and his ascension into glory. The Gospel also contains *the purest and best system of morals* that was ever offered to the world; and would to God they were but practised! The Gospel likewise displays *the infinite perfections of God,* his holiness, justice, and love especially; for 'he who was in the bosom of the Father hath declared him.' The Gospel demands our attention also, as it affords *a wonderful discovery of a future state,* an eternal heaven and hell, in one of which, each of us must soon be fixed for ever. In all these respects, the Gospel deserves and requires our serious and cordial regard.

But all this falls infinitely short of the true nature of the Gospel. The word *Gospel,* in the original, signifies *good news—a good message,* or *glad tidings,* as it is written in the prophet Isaiah (lii. 7) and quoted by St. Paul, in Rom. x. 15: 'How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!'—observe, 'glad tidings of good things.' This is a just description

of the Gospel; never were there *things so good* as those contained in the Gospel—never were there *tidings so glad* as those reported by the Gospel. You are to consider the Gospel as a message of mercy from God to sinners—as a declaration of his good will to lost and ruined man. Take it in Christ's own words: 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' Or, take it in the words of St. Paul: 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.' Now you will observe in these texts, the *condition* of those to whom these glad tidings are sent—a world of men ready to perish, and who *must* have perished if God had not sent his Son to save them. They are *sinners* whom Christ came to save. My friends, we can never rightly understand one word of the Gospel, unless we know and feel our miserable and perishing estate as sinners. In Adam we all fell;—from him we derive a sinful nature. Our minds are total darkness, as to God, and the things which belong to our peace. Our hearts are disaffected to God; we shun him—we fly from him as Adam did when he had sinned;—and as to our *lives*, they are lives of rebellion against him. Our carnal minds are 'enmity against God, they are not subject to the law of God, neither can they be,' till renewed by grace;—and being breakers of the holy law, we are under the curse and penalty of it; obnoxious to the divine wrath, and liable every minute to death and damnation.

Now, do we know this? Do we believe this? Do we feel and lament that this is our case? And does this lead us to cry out in good earnest, 'Men and brethren, what must we do to be saved?' If so, we are prepared to receive the good news of the Gospel. To such persons, especially, is the word of this salvation sent. It informs them that God, in his infinite mercy to sinful man has sent his only-begotten Son to take our nature; and in this nature, and as our

Surety, to obey the laws which we had broken, to make an atonement or satisfaction for sin, by his death, and so reconcile us to God. And also that he will give his Holy Spirit to his people, by whose influences, accompanying the Gospel, their minds shall be enlightened in the knowledge of the truth; they shall be enabled to believe in Jesus; to repent of their sins after a godly sort, and to become new creatures; so as to love, obey, and enjoy him here, and at length to be made perfectly happy in Heaven for ever.

And is not this good news? So the first Christians thought. When Philip went down to Samaria, and 'preached Christ' there, we are told 'there was great joy in that city.' When the Galatians first heard a Gospel-preacher, they received him 'as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus;' and had it been possible, they would have plucked out their eyes, and have given them to him; such was *the blessedness* they then enjoyed. And when the poor heathen jailer of Philippi was brought to the saving knowledge of Christ, 'he rejoiced, believing in God, with all his house.' And so it will be with us in some measure, if we are sensible of our need of Christ, and if we heartily receive this good news. If an army of rebels, subdued in war, and at the will of their conqueror, were doomed to death, would it not fill their hearts with joy, to be told that the king, for the sake of his son, had freely pardoned them all, and received them to his favour, and would never more remember their offence? Or if a company of miserable prisoners, in such a place as the French Bastille, or the Spanish Inquisition, who had endured all the horrors of a rigorous confinement for many years, were to hear the sound of liberty and freedom, would it not gladden their very souls? Such are 'the glad tidings of great joy,' which the Gospel brings to this present company to-day; and such will be their effect too, if you believe to the saving of your souls.

And this, you will perceive, is a very different

scheme from that of those who tell us, that if we are but sincere, and do as well as we can, God is merciful, and we need not fear; and who can make no more of Christ than a good man, who came to teach good things, and set us a good example; and to assure us that God will accept our repentance and sincere obedience instead of that which his law requires. Beware of this merely moral scheme; it will be poison to your souls. If Paul had taught only morality, he need not have said, 'I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ.' The philosophers of Rome would have made no objection to it; but it was the satisfaction of Christ, the sacrifice of Christ, the righteousness of Christ, which they despised. The cross was the stumbling-block of the Jews, and the banter of the Gentiles; but nothing deserves the name of Gospel, which does not make a precious Jesus 'all in all,'—'the first and the last,' in our whole salvation. Therefore, when the Gospel began to be corrupted by false teachers, who told them they must be circumcised and keep the law of Moses, besides believing in Christ, St. Paul cried out aloud, against the motley mixture of Christ's righteousness, and man's righteousness: he called it *another Gospel*, and protested against it, saying, 'If any man preach any other Gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.' We are now to consider,

II. The important *Design* and *Use* of the Gospel—it is 'the *power* of *God* unto salvation;' that is, it is the powerful instrument which God employs, and makes effectual to the salvation of believing sinners.

Salvation is the grand object which God has in view in the Gospel. Salvation is a great word, but a greater thing. Nothing so great, nothing so important as the salvation of a soul, that must be happy or miserable for ever. And it is sad to think that poor thoughtless mortals should ever use such a word in a light and profane manner. What is more common than to hear a person say, As I hope to be saved? And what

notion have such people of salvation? They only hope that when they die, 'they shall not go down to hell, a place of fire and torment; but that they shall go up to Heaven, to some fine unknown shining place above the skies, where they shall be free from all pain and uneasiness.' Poor ignorant creatures! they have no desire to be saved from sin, neither the guilt nor the power of it; no desire to have their hearts changed, their natures refined, and their souls filled with the love of Christ. But the salvation proposed in the Gospel, is great and glorious beyond description; the greatest blessing that man can bestow, or man receive; and it is by the Gospel that he conveys this blessing. Wise men in all ages have seen the need of some remedy for human nature in its miserable and fallen state. Philosophers and lawgivers have tried their skill in vain. They were physicians of no value. The Gospel provides the only medicine for the cure of the soul; and this is effectual. It is God's power to salvation. It is the powerful mean, in the hand of the Holy Spirit, to save us from the guilt of sin, and to give us a right to Heaven; and to save us from the power of sin, and make us fit for Heaven.

1. It is the power of God with respect to the pardon of our sins, and the justification of our persons. Without the Gospel, we could never have been sure that the great God would pardon a sinner; we could never have known upon what terms he would do it. We could never have been certain that we were actually in a state of favour. But the Gospel is a message from God himself, assuring us, not only that 'there is forgiveness with him,' but inviting us to apply for it, and accept of it. The Gospel is 'the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.' God has appointed and accepted the mediation and sacrifice of his Son, for the satisfaction of his law and justice, and making peace; so that he might not charge any sin, or inflict any punishment, upon those who believe, or receive

the atonement. Upon this ground the ministers of the Gospel, as ambassadors for Christ, pray and beseech sinners to be reconciled to God. Since satisfaction is actually made to the justice of God by the death of his Son, that he may honourably show favour to sinners, they entreat them, by these gracious encouragements, to throw down their arms of rebellion, to submit to mercy in God's own way, and to yield themselves up to him without reserve, that everlasting peace and friendship may be established.

That this is the principal design of the text appears from the next verse. 'For in the Gospel is the righteousness of God by faith, revealed to faith;' the righteousness of Christ, which becomes ours by faith, is revealed to be believed on, and trusted in. Now, God makes this Gospel his power to salvation. This is the doctrine which he owns and blesses. By the power of his Spirit he opens the understanding to receive it, and the heart to believe it. Thus the sinner comes to God, is accepted, and saved.

2. It is the power of God with respect to the renewing our spirit, restoring the image of God in our souls, subduing our sins, and forming us to that 'holiness, without which no man can see the Lord.' It was as much the design of Christ to save us from sin, as to save us from hell. We are to esteem it a precious part of his salvation, to be delivered from the slavery of the devil, and the tyranny of our native corruptions. The doctrine of 'salvation by grace, through faith,' is so far from being contrary to holiness, or hurtful to good works, that it is God's powerful instrument of producing them. The Gospel of Jesus Christ contains the purest precepts in the world. The instructions of Christ to his disciples contain the noblest morality; infinitely finer than all that the heathen sages ever knew. The Gospel also furnishes us with motives to obedience, infinitely stronger than any other. Here sin appears to be sinful indeed, especially in the agonies and sufferings of Jesus. Here holiness is displayed with heavenly

beauty, in the character and conduct of the dear Redeemer. Here we are forcibly drawn by the love of Christ, who requires, as a proof of our love to him, that we keep his commandments. He expects all his followers to resemble him. He requires them to deny themselves, and to take up their cross daily: to mortify the deeds of the body; to part with sin, though as dear as a right hand or a right eye; to set their affections on things above; to be fervent in their devotions to God; to abound in every good word and work; to be honest and just in all their actions; to be charitable to the poor and needy; to visit the sick, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked; in a word, 'to love our neighbour as ourselves.'

Nor does the Gospel only *require* such holy dispositions and actions, but it enables believers to attain and perform them. By the same faith which receives Christ as our righteousness, we are united to him; (for 'without him we can do nothing') and by virtue of union to him we can do all things. As the branch derives virtue from the tree to bear fruit, so believers receive 'out of the fullness of Christ, grace for grace,' that they may bring forth the fruits of righteousness and goodness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father.

3. The salvation of God thus begun, shall be perfected in glory. Grace is the bud of glory. Even now, the heirs of heaven have a foretaste of Heaven. They have the Spirit of God, who is the *Seal* and the *Earnest*. 'Hereby,' saith St. John, 'know we that we dwell in God, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. This is the great evidence, the great ground of assurance, that we are in a state of salvation; that we have everlasting life: and having the earnest, we may depend upon the full possession. What a source of consolation is this, in all the troubles of this miserable world! Here only is an antidote to death. And this is enough. If sin be pardoned, death cannot hurt us. The sting of death is sin; but Christ hath extracted the sting. Thanks be to God

who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Soon shall the believer be delivered from all the trials of the present state. The separated spirit shall be with Christ; and the mortal body shall be raised a glorious body. 'Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of the Father.' And thus, you see, the Gospel is the power of God to present and eternal salvation. Is this a thing to be ashamed of? God forbid! This is what we were in the third and last place to prove, namely, that,

III. There is no reason why we should be ashamed of the Gospel, but rather that we ought to glory in it.

Shame is a very powerful passion. It was introduced by sin, and should be applied to nothing else. But it is the misery of our fallen nature that we 'glory in our shame,' and are ashamed of our glory. Wicked men are not ashamed of sin; but they are ashamed of that Gospel which would save them from sin. Through the temptations of the Devil and the ignorance, pride, and carnality of the human heart, true religion has always been accounted a shameful thing, so that it has always required a holy boldness to make an open profession of it. Let us see what it is that makes men ashamed of the Gospel, and whether there be any good reason for being so.

1. Some are ashamed of the Gospel, because they are chiefly poor and mean people who profess it. This was an objection made by the Pharisees to our Saviour himself—'Have any of the Rulers, or of the Pharisees believed on him?' The meanness of Christ's outward appearance, and that of his followers, was a stumbling-block to the Jews. But there is nothing solid in this objection. The design of God in the Gospel is to humble the pride of man, and therefore 'he hath chosen the foolish, weak, base, and despised things of the world, to confound the things of the wise, mighty, and honourable, that no flesh should glory in his presence.' Christ rejoiced that the poor had the Gospel preached unto

them, and that 'divine things were revealed unto babes.'

2. Some are ashamed of the Gospel, because it is, as they pretend, foolish and irrational, such as none but weak and ignorant people can embrace. So the Greeks, who were learned and wise, accounted it at first. So many, who are 'wise in their own conceit,' now reckon it. They pretend that there are mysteries in it which cannot be understood, such as the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, Regeneration, the Resurrection, &c. To this we answer, there are mysteries in nature, which the wisest man cannot explain; and is it any wonder that there should be mysteries in religion, especially that God, who is an infinite Spirit, should be above our comprehension? It is true that there are many things in the Gospel *above* our reason; but we defy any man to prove that there is one thing in it *contrary* to reason. Besides, it should be remembered that man is a fallen creature; that the thoughts of his heart are evil continually; that the natural man (the animal or rational man) receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.' Hence we see that reason, though a noble gift of God, is insufficient to guide us in matters of religion; and he who would be saved, must humble himself as a little child, and pray to be taught of God. But,

3. The true and greatest cause why many are ashamed of the Gospel is, that it requires a holy life. It requires a separation from the world; the denial of self; the mortification of sin. It would not allow a man to live, like a brute, in the indulgence of his carnal lusts. It requires a life of faith, repentance, devotion; in a word, Christ says, to every professor of his religion, 'Give me thine heart.' Now, while a man remains in his natural state, he loves the world, he loves sin, and his heart is enmity against God: 'he loves darkness rather than light, because his deeds are evil.'

But this holy tendency of the Gospel, is so far from being an objection to it, that we should prize it on this very account; this proves it came from God, and on this account St. Paul gloried in it. 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I am crucified to the world.'

APPLICATION.

And now, men and brethren, suffer the word of exhortation. Has God, in his infinite mercy, sent us his glorious Gospel? Then let us be very thankful for it, and very attentive to it. Let it be the study of our lives, and the delight of our hearts. Nothing so justly demands, nothing can so well repay our best regards, as this. It is God's greatest and best gift to a lost world. And he takes particular notice how we receive it. O let us beware of neglecting it! Angels desire to look into these things, and shall not *we* study them diligently, who are so much more interested in them? Compared with the Gospel, all other books are waste paper; compared with the Gospel tidings, all other news is trifling. This alone can teach us how we may be pardoned and sanctified; this alone can secure our happiness in time and eternity.

We have now heard that the Gospel is the *power* of God, it is that which he works by, and renders effectual to the salvation—of whom? To whom is this Gospel the powerful instrument of salvation? It is only to them that believe. Let infidels tremble; they, alas! have no part nor lot in this matter. Faith begins in an *assent*, a cordial assent to the truth of the Gospel. It is received as a divine testimony. The believer sets his seal to it, that it is true. Faith proceeds to *affiance* or *trust* in Christ. He first gives a firm assent to the Gospel, then cordially accepts its blessings: from a conviction that the doctrine is true, he passes to a persuasion that the privileges are his own. The believer then cleaves in-

separably to Christ, depends incessantly on Christ. Gladly does he renounce all dependance on himself, all ideas of human merit: he flies to this refuge, there he is safe; he builds on this foundation, and he shall never be removed. This done, sweet peace takes possession of his conscience; hope enlivens his breast; love warms his heart; zeal fires his soul; and he cries, 'Dearest Saviour, I am thine. Henceforth I will follow thee. I will serve thee all my days on earth, and I desire to be with thee for ever in Heaven.'

And are any ashamed of this Gospel; a Gospel so wise, so holy, so honourable to God, so safe to man? Let them be ashamed of it who never knew its nature, who never felt its power. No man can be ashamed of it, if it be the power of God to his soul. No: 'he that believeth, hath the witness, or testimony, in himself;' he can give a reason of the hope that is in him; and being baptized unto Christ, he will not be 'ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under his banner against sin, the world, and the devil; and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end.' O, beware! beware, young people, lest any seduce you from the faith, by the pride of reason, and the sophistry of wicked men. Ever be on your guard, and remember those awful words of Christ,—'Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall also the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels.'

Finally. 'Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from all iniquity.' As we must not be ashamed of the Gospel, neither let us be a shame to it. Many are too much prejudiced against the Bible, even to read it; but they love to read the lives of professors. Let them see the Gospel transcribed in our daily walk. So shall we adorn and recommend it to the world, and constrain them to say, that Christianity is all divine.

SERMON XXXV

ROMANS viii. 13.

If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

THESE words set before us LIFE and DEATH; —*eternal* life, or *eternal* death: they plainly show us what will be the eternal consequence of a life of sin, or of a state of grace: and therefore it is of the greatest importance to us clearly to understand them, in order that we may know what will be our future portion. 'It is a question (said an old divine) you ought seriously to put to yourselves, Shall I be saved, or shall I be damned?' If you have any spark of conscience left, when you are sick or dying, you will put it with an anxious and trembling heart: 'Poor soul, whither art thou going?' It is better, my friends, to put this question *now*, while you have opportunity to correct your error, if hitherto you have been wrong. And nothing will sooner determine it than this text, 'If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die,' &c. These words contain two things, which I shall express in two plain sentences.

I. If sin *live* in us, we must *die* eternally; and,
II. If sin *die* in us, we shall *live* eternally.

I. If sin *live* in us, we shall *die*; that is, if it reign and rule: 'if we live after the flesh, we shall die.'

By the *flesh*, we are to understand human nature in its present fallen state. Man is made up of two parts, body and soul, or flesh and spirit; but man is

now called *flesh*, because the spirit is dead to God, and he lives only a fleshly, or animal life. So God spake of the wicked world before the flood (Gen. vi. 3): 'And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man,' that is, by the good counsels and faithful warnings of Noah and others; 'for that he also is flesh'—incurably corrupt, carnal, and sensual; sunk into the mire of sin and fleshly lusts. This is still the case of all men before they receive the grace of God; they are flesh. They take their name from that part which rules, which is the flesh, and not the spirit: they are wholly engaged by things which concern the body and its sensual delights. Hence it is that the *mind* itself is called *carnal* or *fleshly* (verse 5, 6), 'For they that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.' This bad turn of mind is called *flesh*, because it exerts itself by means of the senses and members of the body; for carnal men 'yield their members servants to uncleanness, and to iniquity unto iniquity.' Rom. vi. 19. Habits and practices of uncleanness and iniquity are like tyrannical lords and masters, who rule over sinners, to whom they have resigned the members of their bodies, and the affections of their minds.

Now, to live *after the flesh*, is to obey the dictates and orders of our corrupt nature: to gratify its sinful desires, without regard to the will of God, yea, in direct contradiction to his will. And this will appears more plainly by considering the *Actions*, the *Words*, and the *Thoughts* of a carnal man.

Take a view, in the first place, of his *Actions*. Among these, the apostle (Gal. v. 19) mentions 'Adultery, fornication, uncleanness,' &c. These are abominations to which corrupt nature is strongly inclined. The world is full of pollution through lust. In youth, especially, these sins are predominant; and 'It is a shame even to speak of those things that are

done in secret.' And however lightly the sins of uncleanness may be thought of in general, we are assured by the scriptures, that 'whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.' *Drunkenness* is another work of the flesh. Fools make a mock of this sin also; but St. Paul declares (1 Cor. vi. 10) that 'drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God.' It is very common for a person to promise himself security in this sin, and to say, 'I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst:' but what does God say in this case? 'The Lord will not spare him, but the anger of the Lord, and his jealousy shall smoke against that man.' Deut. xxix. 20. The *profane* man also lives after the flesh. What can be a plainer proof that a man is destitute of the fear of God, than his daring to set the Most High at defiance, and wantonly and wickedly to take his awful name in vain? The *Sabbath-breaker* lives after the flesh. The man who, having no regard to the authority of God, no love to his service, and no care for his own soul, dares to spend the sacred hours of the Lord's Day in worldly business, idleness, or pleasure. The conduct of the Sabbath-breaker proves, in a dreadful manner, that he is flesh, and as much a stranger to the life of God in the soul, as the beasts that perish. 'Let no man, then, deceive himself with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.'

But it is not only by these grossly immoral actions that men appear to live after the flesh; a man's *Speech* betrayeth him. 'Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.' We have already mentioned cursing and swearing, on account of which our land mourneth. Equally carnal is that 'corrupt communication which proceedeth out of the mouth;' that 'filthiness, foolish talking, and jesting, which are not convenient.' O how is the tongue, the glory of man, debased by cursing, lying, slandering, evil speaking, lewd songs, and wanton speeches. 'The

tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity, it defileth our members, and is set on fire of hell.' James iii. 6. The conversation of carnal men is wholly carnal. They can talk fluently for hours together upon worldly subjects; but let the things of God be introduced, the company is struck dumb!—natural men can find nothing to say to God, or to one another, on the great and glorious subjects of salvation and eternal life.

But we must go a step further: 'As a man *thinketh* in his heart, so is he.' A man must be judged of by his prevailing, chosen, and delightful *thoughts*. 'Out of the heart,' said our Lord, 'proceed evil thoughts.' A good man may have bad thoughts; but a bad man, a natural man, cannot have good thoughts. A good man hates vain, wicked, lewd, or blasphemous thoughts; but a wicked man loves, cherishes, and delights in them. It is said of the wicked, 'God is not in all his thoughts.' He rises in the morning without any thoughts of God. He goes about his business without any thoughts of him. He sits down to his table, and rises from it, without any thoughts of him; and he goes to rest, like a beast, in the same manner. Thus it is said in verse 5 of this chapter—'They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh:'—they are *carnally minded;* they constantly and habitually consult and relish, pursue and delight in only worldly, sensual, and sinful things, such as are agreeable to their carnal and unrenewed appetites. And this may serve to convince some persons, how much they deceive themselves respecting their true state before God. They flatter themselves that they shall be saved because they are not so wicked as others; but they have never noticed the prevailing bent and inclination of their minds. They are not drunkards, or swearers, or liars; 'but they mind earthly things;' and St. John assures us, that 'if we love the world, the love of the Father is not in us.' Doubtless, there is a necessary, lawful, and commendable regard to our proper callings and worldly affairs; and there is a

lawful enjoyment of worldly comforts; but the evil lies in this—so to love the world as to make it our portion, our chief good; to love the world more than God, who does not reckon himself to be loved sincerely, unless he be loved *supremely*, 'with all our heart and soul and strength.' The love of God and the love of the world, are like the two scales of a balance,—as the one rises the other falls; and let every man ask himself how it is with him. O how little place have the blessed God—the precious Redeemer—the Holy Spirit—the care of the soul—the duties of religion and the concerns of eternity, in the hearts of natural men! The thoughts of these things are seldom entertained, and then they are not welcomed. They are a burden and a task; and the mind, when forced to regard them, dislikes them, and springs from them again into worldly matters with delight, as a fish into the water, which is its own proper element.

Now, Sirs, as you love your souls, mark the consequence of living after the flesh: 'If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die!' Dreadful words—'Ye shall die!'—'To be carnally minded is death.' It is a kind of death in itself. The carnal man is now dead to God—'dead while he liveth'—'dead in trespasses and sins;' and, 'the wages of sin is death'—not only the death of the body, which is the separation of the soul from it; but the death of soul and body too, in their everlasting separation from God, the fountain of all happiness. 'This is the second death,' as it comes after that of the body, and is inexpressibly more terrible; and shall never end in a resurrection to eternal life. At present God exercises much patience towards his enemies;—his sun shines, and his rain descends, both on good and bad men. He gives them time and space for repentance, to which his merciful goodness ought to lead them. But when all these have proved in vain, and the man has persisted in his carnal course to the end of life, then God will withdraw all his favours; his mercy indeed will be clean gone for ever, and he will be

favourable no more. And O, woe, woe, woe, to the man from whom God departs, and to whom he will say, 'Depart from me, ye cursed.'

All this is the natural and necessary consequence of living after the flesh: what else could be reasonably expected? There are but two eternal states for men after this life. Every man is training up for one of these. The carnal man is unfit for Heaven; there he cannot come—for all the joys and employments of the blessed are spiritual. Delighting in God, loving God, praising God, are the charming employments of the redeemed. But the carnal man well knows that he has no relish for these things; and he could not be happy in Heaven, were he admitted there. What then must be his portion? There is no other place for him but Hell; and for this he has been fitting himself all his days: training himself up in enmity against God, hardening his heart, and abusing his mercies, despising his grace, neglecting his salvation, trampling on his authority, and blaspheming his name; thus he is preparing for that horrid dungeon, where he must be the companion of men like-minded, and of devils whose dictates he obeyed. 'Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.'

O think of this, ye who live in sin! See what an enemy you have, even the flesh—an enemy *within*; an enemy, without which the devil might tempt and the world invite in vain. Beware then of indulging the flesh—it may seem to be your friend, but it is your worst foe; and, like Judas, it kisses to betray. Fly then from the allurements of sinful pleasure and sensual enjoyments. I beseech you 'to abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul;' and in your turn declare war against the flesh. This indeed is a just and necessary war; a war that shall be successful and glorious: for, as it is added in our text, 'If ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live;' which leads us to the second thing proposed, namely,

II. If sin *die* in us, we shall *live eternally*.

Here we must consider what is meant by mortifying sin—by what help we may do it—and the blessed consequences of doing it.

To *mortify* sin is to *kill* it—to *put it to death*, as the magistrates put a felon to death, by due course of justice: he is suspected, apprehended, tried, and executed. We must first suspect ourselves and our sins. Consideration is the first step in religion. He who never suspected he was wrong, may depend upon it he is not yet right. Sin must be considered as our worst enemy; the tyrant that would enslave and destroy our souls. We must find out our sins, or 'be sure they will find us out.' We must determine, by the grace of God, to destroy them, or they will destroy us. The matter must be brought to this issue, kill or be killed. You must kill sin, or it will kill you.

But how is this to be done? Sin must be *crucified*. This is the manner of killing it which God has appointed: 'They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.' Gal. v. 24. The destruction of our sins is compared to the crucifixion of Christ, not only because it is like it, but because it proceeds from it. There is no death of sin, but by the death of Christ; by virtue of it, and by interest in it.

Crucifixion is a *violent* and *painful* death; and so is the death of sin. Our sins must not be left to die of themselves;—some people, especially old people, think that they have left their sins, when the fact is, their sins have left them; or one sin has left them to make room for another. Sin must be seized, though in the height of its health and power; seized as a thief or murderer who breaks into your house. It may be very painful to mortify the deeds of the body. Jesus Christ compares it to cutting off a right hand, or plucking out a right eye; but he says, this is better than going to hell with two hands or two eyes. It may be very hard to break off from old sins, but it

must be done; and, by the grace of God, *may* be done.

Crucifixion is a *scandalous death;* only the worst of slaves and criminals are put to death in this manner. So the Christian, who, through the Spirit, mortifies the deeds of the body, puts off the old man of sin, and puts on the Lord Jesus Christ, may expect to be despised as his Saviour was. The world will bear morality, but it hates holiness. Religion has generally borne some nick-name. Formerly, they called pious men *Puritans,* as if it were a scandalous thing to be purified from the pollutions of the world; and now they call religious people *Methodists,* as if it were shameful to pursue the methods which God himself prescribes. But 'he that will live Godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution.'

Crucifixion is a *slow* and *lingering* death. Our Lord was several hours on the cross; and some have been as many days. So sin dies slowly. Mortifying the deeds of the body, is a constant act; to be continued as long as we live. The best believer cannot say sin is dead; but he can bless God that sin is dying. It is nailed to the cross; has received some mortal wounds—it is gradually weakening; and, ere long, God will send death to give the finishing stroke, and the believer shall shout *Victory*, saying, 'Blessed be God, who hath delivered me from this body of sin and death; I thank God, through Jesus Christ my Lord.'

But, by what means or by what help, may we effectually mortify sin? Our text says, 'Through the Spirit'—by the gracious aid and influence of the Holy Spirit enabling us to do it. 'Without me,' said Christ, 'ye can do nothing;' and experience proves it true. How many poor souls have been sensible of the error of their ways! at times alarmed about their sins; and have resolved to forsake them, and lead a new life; but knowing nothing of their own weakness or of Christ's strength, they have

'Resolved, and re-resolved, and died the same.'

To as little purpose have others said many prayers, fasted certain days, denied themselves the comforts of life, or submitted to the painful penance of Popish priests: the power of sin was not lessened; the principle of sin was not weakened; the practice of sin was not prevented. When the sense of sin was worn off, and the fears of hell abated, they 'returned like the dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.'

'A young gentleman, whose sensual lusts were extremely violent, procured an entire female skull; and every morning, before he went out, spent some minutes in surveying it; expecting that the sight of so unpleasing an object, would operate as an antidote to the power of that temptation, to which he was so subject. But, alas! his corrupt inclination still prevailed, and he sinned as frequently as ever. So he gave away the skull, finding it did him no service. Afterwards, God was pleased to convert him; and vital grace did that for him, which a dead skull was unable to effect. His easy-besetting sin had no more dominion over him, from the day that the Holy Ghost laid effectual hold of his heart.'

We must first *have* the Spirit, that we may experience his sanctifying power. Having the Spirit, makes all the difference between a true Christian and a man of the world; 'for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.'—'That which is born of the flesh is flesh.' There is nothing in the flesh, or corrupt nature, that can crucify the flesh, or prevent its corrupt actings. Something of a nature directly contrary to it must be added, and that is a new and divine principle, implanted by regeneration: for 'that which is born of the Spirit is spirit:' the regenerated person is a spiritual person, possessed of a principle like its author; and this principle acts according to its spiritual nature, in spiritual duties, and particularly in this, the mortification of sin.

The Spirit helps us to mortify sin, by enabling us

to discover it, and by showing us its hateful and abominable nature; filling our souls with a sincere dislike to it, and a holy determination to destroy it. He takes away the stony insensible heart, and gives us a heart of flesh, a heart to mourn for sin, a heart to oppose sin, a heart to watch against sin, and shun the first approaches towards it.

But especially he helps us to mortify sin by giving us faith, and leading us to Christ for pardon, righteousness, and strength. In the first verse of this chapter it is said—'There is no condemnation to them which are *in Christ Jesus;*' and then it follows, 'who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.' Many of the Jews 'followed after righteousness, but they did not attain it. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law, for they stumbled at the stumbling-stone.' Let us beware of stumbling in the same manner. Faith in Christ is the chief instrument for killing sin. Behold the Lamb of God bleeding and dying, not only to take away the guilt of sin, that it may not condemn, but the power of sin also, that it may not prevail. 'Sin shall not have dominion over thee, believer; for thou art not under the law, but under grace.' —See, flowing from the wounded side of thy crucified Lord, blood and water: blood to pardon, water to cleanse. It was the design of the dear Redeemer 'to destroy the works of the devil,'—'to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.' The Lord Jesus having thus designed the death of sin in believers, by his own death, is ready to apply the power of it for that purpose, to all who believe in him. Come then, by faith, to Jesus; tell him of the power of thy sins, and of thy inability to destroy them; plead the fulness that is in him for thy supply; beseech him to subdue thine iniquities, and leave the matter in his hands: his grace is sufficient for thee; his strength shall be perfected in thy weakness. Accept his help: his power, his grace, his faithfulness, are all engaged

for thine assistance, and thou shalt not apply or wait in vain.

This promised help of the Spirit does not exclude the use of means on our part. The Spirit so works *in* us, as also to work *by* us. The duty is ours; the grace is his. We must watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation. We must remember his eye is always upon us. We must call to mind the obligations we are under from duty, from gratitude, from baptismal and sacramental engagements; the relation we bear to Christ, to the church, and to the world. We must use with moderation the comforts of life, and instead of pampering the body, bring it under and keep it in subjection.

Thus doing, *we shall live.* There is no condemnation to persons of this character. Though they find, to their daily sorrow, that 'the flesh lusteth against the Spirit,' they have reason to rejoice that 'the Spirit lusteth against the flesh.' This is an evidence that they have 'passed from death unto life.' They live *indeed*, for Christ liveth in them. They live to purpose, they live to God;—and in this, their gradual sanctification, consists their meetness for Heaven, where sin shall be all done away. O Christian, go on! Be not weary in well doing; fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on *eternal life.*

But, O sinner, what will be the end of thy present pursuits? 'The end of these things is death.' Lay to heart the solemn truths you heard in the beginning of this discourse. Remember that life and death have been set before you: life, if sin be slain; death, if sin prevail. Put home then to thy conscience the important question—Am I living after the flesh, or after the Spirit? And by this you may determine your present state and future prospects. If thou livest after the flesh, thou shalt die; that is, thou shalt be damned. And are you in love with death and destruction? Is it nothing to you that the terrors of the Almighty are sounded in your ears? Do you love your sins so well as to be damned for them? O,

be wiser! Set eternal pains against momentary pleasures. The *pleasures* of sin are but for a season; but the *pains* of sin are for evermore.' And O, do not flatter yourselves that you may enjoy the pleasures of sin in this world, and yet enjoy the pleasures of Heaven in another. The God who, says, in our text, 'If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die,' is a God of truth; he cannot lie. 'Upon the wicked he will rain snares, fire, and brimstone, and an horrible tempest; this shall be the portion of their cup.'—Come, then, forsake the foolish and live. Wrong not your own souls;—forsake not your own mercies. Let the time past suffice to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, and to have served divers lusts and pleasures. Open your eyes and behold your danger. Flee from the wrath to come;—confess your sins to God—beseech him to pardon them; and pray for the Holy Spirit to work faith in your heart, and to enable you 'to mortify the deeds of the body, that you may live.'

SERMON XXXVI

ISAIAH i. 18.

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: *though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.*

THE pardon of sin has been justly called, 'The life-blood of religion.' It is this which runs through all parts of the Scripture, like the blood in our veins, and is the foremost object in the glorious Gospel. No man has a grain of religion, till he sees the need, and feels the want of the pardon of his sins. No man is happy in religion, till he has reason to conclude that his sins are pardoned. Gratitude for this blessing is the grand incentive to holy obedience, and triumph on account of it forms a principal part of the bliss of glorified saints. How worthy, then, is this subject of our most serious regard! We all need pardon; and *pardon* or *punishment* must be our portion.

Among the precious promises of God's word, this, in our text, is one of the chief. And it appears the more gracious, as it follows a list of most heinous and abominable sins charged upon the Jews. This will appear more clearly by considering the three parts of our text.

1. A CHARGE; 2. AN INVITATION; and, 3. A PROMISE.

1. The first thing in the text is a CHARGE implied, and more particularly expressed in the former verses of this chapter. The charge is *sin*—sin, the most aggravated, the most horrid, the most enormous;—sins called *scarlet* and *crimson*. The *greatness* of sin is intended by these words. *Scarlet* and *crimson* are colours far remote from *white*, which is the emblem of innocence or righteousness. The saints in glory are represented as 'clothed in white robes;' and 'in fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of the saints.' But here sinners are represented as in garments stained with blood. The bloody, murderous, destructive nature of sin may be intended. Sin has slain its millions. If all the bodies of the dead were heaped up, they would form the greatest mountain in the world; and we might say—Sin slew all these; for, by one man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin; so that death hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.' Some understand by the word *scarlet—double-dyed*—as deeply tinctured by sin as possible; as when any garment has been twice dyed, first in the wool, and again in the thread or piece. So great sinners are twice dyed; first in their corrupt nature, for all men are born in sin; and then dyed again in the long confirmed habits of actual transgression.

But let us look over the particulars of this charge. Sinners are first charged with *ingratitude* (verse 2): 'Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord hath spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.' Call a man ungrateful, and you call him all that is bad; but the ingratitude of children is the worst ingratitude. Children are under the greatest obligations to their tender parents, for food and raiment, protection and education; but if, instead of dutiful obedience and affectionate care, they return evil for good, rebellion instead of subjection, it is like fixing a dagger in a parent's heart. Such a trial David felt, in

the wicked conduct of his beloved Absalom. In this manner God speaks of man's sin. God is good; and 'the goodness of God leadeth us to repentance;' but impenitent sinners 'despise the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; and thus treasure up wrath against the day of wrath.'

Again—sinners are charged with *insensibility* (ver. 3.): 'The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people do not consider.' It is a sad thing indeed, that man, who was made in the image of God, should be made, by sin, like the beasts that perish! yea, worse than they are. The ox is a stupid creature, yet he knows his owner, and submits his neck to the yoke; the ass is still more stupid, yet he knows when he is well off, and abides by his master's crib; but sinners are more base, more ignorant, more stupid; 'They have the worst qualities of brutes without the best.' They do not know God; they do not consider their duty to God, nor their obligations to God; even Israel, that might and ought to know better.

They are further charged with *forsaking God.* All sinners do so. They turn their backs upon him; they say, in effect, 'Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.'—'What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit shall we have if we pray unto him?' Besides this, they *corrupted others.* They were not content to eat the Devil's morsel alone; they must entice others, to poison them with it. And indeed, this is awfully common among us. When young persons fall into the sin of uncleanness, how active are they to seduce others; when men fall into the sin of drunkenness, how busy are they to engage others in the same vice.

These sins were *universal* (ver. 4): 'Ah, sinful *nation,* a people laden with iniquity!' All orders of people were guilty; the 'whole head was sick, the whole heart was faint.' 'God knows it is thus in

England. We are a wicked people, and the Lord is *provoked* with us. All the miseries of human life, all the terrors and agonies of death, all the torments of the damned, are proofs of God's anger against sin. Sin is a heavy load, though fools make light of it. And they who make light of it now, are likely to feel its dreadful weight in another world. Sooner or later it will be found a burden too heavy to bear. Happy they, who now, feeling its load, obey the kind invitation of Christ: 'Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'

The condition of Israel, and of every sinner, is compared (ver. 6) to that of a human body, wholly disordered, and become intolerably loathsome. 'From the sole of the foot, even unto the head, there is no soundness in it; but wounds and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.' See, sinner, thy wretched picture! Sin is the disease of thy soul, and the worst symptom is, thou knowest it not. We pity the ravings of a man in a fever, who fancies himself in health: such is the dangerous condition of sinners who boast of their 'good hearts,' or call their abominations 'human frailties,' or 'youthful follies.' In the eye of a pure and holy God, the sinner is far more loathsome than a carcase covered with bleeding wounds, running sores, or filthy ulcers.

It is absolutely necessary that each of us should personally know that this is his own case. Ministers are, at the peril of their own souls, obliged to declare this; they must shew the people their sins and warn them from God, or the sinner's blood will be required at their hands. But if sinners are faithfully warned, ministers are free from their blood; their blood is upon their own heads. But, O! how unwilling are men to see and own their true condition! How do they shut their eyes against the light that

would make manifest their works of darkness! How dearly do they love the darkness that conceals their sins! How angry are they to be told of their disease! How do they hate the gospel that reveals a remedy, and shun the kind Physician who would cure them! And yet, mark their inconsistency! Do you not hear them deny, to men, that they are *condemned*, and yet cry to God to *have mercy on them?* But if they are not condemned, what need have they of *mercy?* And if they are, why do they deny their lost estate? We hear them, also, praising God for his 'inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ;' but how absurd is this, if they believe not, if they feel not, the wretched bondage of their sins?

But now observe, with wonder and joy, the astonishing grace of God; what language might sinners justly expect, who had been convinced of ingratitude, rebellion, insensibility, and every provoking sin? Might they not well expect that God should say, 'Depart from me, ye cursed?' But, O surprising mercy! his language is, 'Come now, and let us reason together;' and this is the

SECOND thing in the text, THE INVITATION:—'And is this the manner of man, O Lord?' Far from it. Truly, 'his thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are his ways our ways.' God does not deal with men, as men deal with each other. If a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away? No: but God, from whom no enemy can escape, and who can, at any time, take the deserved vengeance, invites poor sinners to come and reason with him. God had charged Israel with their many sins: he had visited them with national judgments;—he had refused to accept their hypocritical devotions;—he had threatened to give them up, and utterly forsake them; and lastly, he had called them to repentance and reformation (ver. 16, 17): 'Wash ye, make ye clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes;

cease to do evil, learn to do well—seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.' And then he adds, 'Come now, and let us *reason* together.' God is willing to shew the equity of his conduct. Let those bold offenders come and plead their own cause, and shew what they have to say for themselves; and let them find fault, if they can, with the divine proceedings. If they will persist in sin, their damnation is just. If they confess and forsake it, they shall find mercy: their scarlet sins shall be as white as snow.

We shall take occasion, from hence, briefly to shew that true religion, *vital* religion, is the most reasonable thing in the world.

Is not self-preservation highly reasonable? We account it the first law of Nature, and should blame the man who neglects it. Is a house on fire? Let the inhabitant escape for his life.—Is the prodigal ready to starve? Let him hasten to his father's house. —Is the man drowning? Let him seize on the rope thrown out for his help.—Is the ship sinking? Let the sailors throw overboard their valuable stores, for 'all that a man hath will he give for his life.' But is the life of the body all? What must become of the soul? Shall we take all these pains to preserve a life that must inevitably end, and shall we take no pains to save a soul that is immortal, and which must live for ever, in Heaven or Hell? Hear how Christ reasons in Matt. x. 28: 'Fear not them which kill the *body*, but are not able to kill the *soul*; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both body and soul in hell;' for consider:—God asks the question—'Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the day that I shall deal with thee?'

Is it not reasonable for a man to do well for himself? Yes: 'Men will praise thee when thou doest well for thyself.' We commend the honest, ingenious, industrious tradesman; but, O! 'the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children

of light.' Is it reasonable for a man to mind his own business? Well, 'one thing is needful;' the care of thy soul is the business of life. Is it reasonable to improve opportunities for business,—as fairs and markets? Redeem then the time, and catch the golden opportunities of gain to thy soul. Is it reasonable to make a good bargain? The Christian makes the best in the world. He is the wise merchant, who seeking goodly pearls, findeth, at length, Jesus Christ, the pearl of great price, and goeth and selleth all that he hath to buy it. Is it reasonable to lay up for a rainy day? How much more to provide for a dying day, that we may be ready for the great change, and find it gain to die? Is it reasonable to cultivate friendship with the wise, the good, and great? O how wise to make Christ our friend, to have an agent in Heaven, an advocate with the Father! for, indeed, 'Jesus Christ is the best friend, or the worst enemy we can have.'

Is it not reasonable to believe the God of truth? —The word of God has every confirmation we could wish. It is confirmed by the exact fulfilment of numerous predictions—by the performance of unquestionable miracles—by its perfect agreement with matters of fact, both in observation and experience; and by the daily wonders of grace performed by its means. Whatever some men pretend to the contrary, they, and they only, act a rational part, who take God at his word; while others are so unreasonable as to 'make God a liar,' and give credit to the grand deceiver.

Finally. *Is not love to God and man perfectly reasonable?* This is the whole of our religion. Is it reasonable or not, think you, to love the best of beings, better than all other beings? and if we love him, we shall believe him, and obey him. Should not a creature love his Maker? Should not a dependent person love his benefactor? Should not a redeemed sinner love his Saviour? And what is the

whole of morality, as it respects man, but loving our neighbour as ourselves; and where is the man who wishes not thus to be treated by others?

But we have a further and a very strong inducement to obey the divine invitation, and come to reason with him, for he has made a most gracious PROMISE in the text, which is the

THIRD particular of our discourse. This gracious promise is, 'Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.'

The pardon of sin is, as we observed at the beginning, the first and chief thing in religion. It was the great business of Christ upon earth to procure it; he took our flesh that he might take our sin; and died, 'the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.' It is the principal design of the gospel which is preached to us 'that we may obtain forgiveness of sins.' It is the first blessing sought by renewed souls; 'for this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found.' It constitutes one of the titles of the blessed God: 'Who is like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity?' And it composes a part of the songs of Heaven; for the redeemed continually adore 'the Lamb that was slain, and who washed them from their sins in his own blood.'

The pardon of sin originates in the free mercy and sovereign grace of God, without respect to any thing good in the creature. That *men* are saved rather than *angels;* and that *one* man is pardoned rather than *another*, are matters of mercy alone; for 'it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth; but of God that sheweth mercy: for he saith to Moses, I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.' It was mere mercy, that a Saviour was provided: for 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in

him might not perish, but have everlasting life.' God delighteth in mercy. It is his most glorious name; for when Moses desired to see his *glory*, God caused his *goodness* to pass before him, and proclaimed his name; which name was this: 'The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin.' Exod. xxxiii. 18, 19, and xxxiv. 5, 6. We are not to suppose that some men obtain mercy because they have not sinned so much as others; as great sins do not prevent pardon, so little sinners cannot lay a claim to it: nor are we to think that there are some good things in some sinners to balance their bad ones, and so entitle them to mercy: nor that the tears, or prayers, or reformation of any man can merit favour at the hands of God. No; all these, and every thing else that looks like merit, must be renounced altogether. Every mouth must be stopped. All the world must plead guilty; and all the saved must own, that God, for his own name's sake alone, pardons their iniquity.

But we are not to expect the pardon of sin from an absolute God. The pardon of sin is an act of justice, as well as of mercy. Mercy on God's part, but justice on the account of Christ. In the pardon of sin, justice must be considered as well as mercy. If God had pardoned sin without a satisfaction, what provision would have been made for the honour of his holiness, justice, or truth? God would have seemed to wink at sin; he would have seemed to have no concern for the moral government of the world; and his truth, which was engaged to see the threatening against sin fulfilled, would have been forfeited; but in the redemption of Jesus Christ, 'Mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have embraced each other;' in a word, God is just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus; he is 'a just God and a Saviour.' In this

blessed way, Justice itself becomes the believer's friend: for Christ having paid the debt, it cannot be demanded a second time of the believer; and, therefore, God is not only merciful in pardoning sin, but 'he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins; and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' 1 John i. 9.

Another principal thing in the doctrine of forgiveness is, that it is *by faith alone* we are made partakers of pardoning mercy. Jesus Christ himself says, Acts xxvi. 18, 'that they may receive forgiveness of sins *through faith* that is in me;' and St. Paul says, 'By grace ye are saved, *through faith*.' By faith we mean, 'a belief of the truth,' especially of the testimony of God concerning his Son Jesus Christ; 'that he hath given to us eternal life, and that this life is in his Son.' The man who is taught of God, made sensible of his sin, and desirous of mercy, hears the gospel, which is good news of salvation by Jesus Christ: he hears 'that there is forgiveness with God, that he may be feared;' that Christ is willing and able to save sinners; and that 'his blood cleanseth from all sin.' He assents to this truth, he relies upon it, and acts accordingly; and in proportion to the credit which he gives to the gospel, and the dependence he places on the faithfulness of God,—such is his joy and peace in believing.

One thing more must be noticed: the perfection of pardon, which is expressed by making scarlet as snow, and crimson like wool. We are to understand this of the *sinner*, not of his *sins*. Pardon does not alter the nature, or lessen the evil of sin: but the sinner, however deeply dyed in sin, double-dyed and drenched in the most enormous, aggravated, and bloody sins, shall, upon believing, be as thoroughly discharged from the guilt of them, as if he had never sinned at all. This is an act of Almighty power. To discharge the colours of scarlet and crimson may be impossible to human art; but to pardon the vilest

sinners is perfectly easy to God. Elsewhere the same idea is expressed, by casting our sins behind his back —loosing them in the depths of the sea—blotting them out of a book—forgetting them—and removing them from us, as far as the east is from the west. Such is the perfection of pardoning mercy.

APPLICATION.

Come, Sirs, what think you of sin? Perhaps you forget it; but God does not forget it. If it be not pardoned, it will be brought into judgment. Think not yourselves safe because you fancy your sins are little, or because they give you no disturbance, or because you prosper in the world, or because you have hopes of mercy. 'The wages of sin is death.' The law curses you for one offence; and, if you are not redeemed, you must be ruined; if not pardoned, you must be punished. If you believe not in Christ, you are condemned already. Notwithstanding the mercy of God, and the merits of Christ, if you continue in a state of ignorance, carnality, and unbelief, they will not at all avail you. Food cannot nourish, if not received; nor a medicine heal, if not applied. You will be none the better for Christ, if you do not come to him; but you will be much the worse;—for how shall you escape, if you neglect so great salvation? Think of these things, O ye children of men, before it be too late! How can you enjoy a meal, or sleep in your beds, while your sins remain unpardoned? O, delay no longer! No longer abuse the patience and goodness of God. Instantly fly to the refuge, O ye prisoners of hope! As yet the door is open. God will pardon the greatest sinner that comes to him by Jesus Christ. Take with you the words of the text, and say, 'Lord, I come at thy call; my sins are, indeed, as scarlet, for thy name's sake make them white as snow: my crimes are red like crimson, O wash me in the fountain of the Saviour's blood, and they shall be as wool!'

Believer, all hail! 'Blessed art thou whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity.' Happy art thou. God gave to thee to see thy sins, to feel thy sins, to lament thy sins. God opened thine eyes to understand his gospel. God enabled thee to come with all thy sins to Christ; and believing in him, thou hast passed from death unto life, and shalt never come into condemnation. Admire the love of God;—admire the blood of Christ;—admire the grace of the Holy Spirit:

'And let your glad obedience prove
How much you owe, how much you love?'

SERMON XXXVII.

LUKE xxiii. 42, 43.

And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily, I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.

WHO can read these words, or consider the conversion and pardon of the dying thief, without exclaiming in the words of St. Paul—'Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound!' Here is a wonderful instance of divine, free, and sovereign grace, abounding towards the chief of sinners: it is recorded for the encouragement of great sinners in every age, that *they* may take refuge in Christ, 'who are ready to perish;' and it affords a pleasing proof that 'he is able to save to the *uttermost* all who come to God by him.'

Our blessed Lord was crucified with two thieves, and placed between them, that he might be thought the worst of the three. But thus the Scripture was fulfilled, 'He was numbered with the transgressors,' or 'criminals.' The chief priests, the scribes, the rulers, and the mob, all joined in mocking and deriding him: not content with beholding his extreme sufferings, they had the cruelty to add insult to his pains. 'Come down from the cross,' said they, 'and then we will believe. Thou, that didst save others, save thyself:' and 'Save us too,' said the thieves; not seriously, but by way of taunt; for it is written, 'The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.' O what an instance

is this of the savage hardness of the human heart! how dreadful, that wicked men, dying in their sins, should strive to forget their own agonies, that they might join in abusing and insulting the Son of God! A state of more desperate and confirmed wickedness can hardly be conceived.

But, behold the grace of God! One of these men is snatched as a brand from the fire; plucked, as in an instant, out of the very jaws of destruction. An astonishing, perhaps a sudden change is produced. He cries for mercy, and he obtains it. He looks to Jesus, and is saved. From being a hardened sinner, he becomes at once an eminent saint; obtains assurance of immediate bliss; and passes from the cross to glory.

Let us now carefully consider the two parts of our text, into which it naturally divides itself:

I. The prayer of the dying malefactor.

II. The gracious answer of the Saviour.

In attending to the first, consider for a moment the character of the criminal, for a criminal he was; a malefactor—a highwayman—one who belonged to a desperate gang of robbers who infested that country; a set of seditious banditti, who were for shaking off the Roman yoke, and who lived by rapine and plunder. It is not improbable that he was a murderer also; for such men scruple not to kill as well as steal. This is the man who becomes the trophy of sovereign grace. For surely it will be admitted that here was no previous goodness, or worthiness, to recommend him to the divine favour.

Is it not astonishing to hear such a man as this suing for mercy? But what cannot grace effect, and that in a moment! He who in the first creation said, 'Let there be light, and there was light,' can, in an instant, dart a ray of spiritual light into the darkest mind. Whether any means were employed for the communication of this light or not, we cannot say.

Some imagine he was first affected by the strange, total, supernatural darkness, which then suddenly overspread the land—an emblem of the inward darkness which soon involved the sacred soul of our dear Redeemer; and a dismal presage of the dreadful ignorance and darkness which should cover the Jews, and which has covered them ever since. Possibly, the pathetic prayer of our Lord for his murderers first touched his heart—'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' There was so much dignity, so much tenderness and mercy, in this, that perhaps it was the means, in the hands of the Spirit, for melting the rock of ice in his bosom. Or, who can say whether, before this unhappy, or shall I now say, *happy* man, joined himself to the gang of thieves, whether he had not now and then mingled with the multitude, who heard our Saviour's sermons, and saw his amazing miracles? And though his vices had long suppressed every good motion in his heart, yet now, in the time of his trouble, he calls to mind what he had before neglected. 'For a grain of the divine word frequently falls on an uncultivated soil; so that it produces no fruit till many years after, when sufferings and afflictions cause it to spring up.' And this may afford a ray of comfort to ministers and parents, encouraging them to hope, that though their prayers and instructions seem for the present to be lost, yet that, finally, 'their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.'

Behold, he prayeth! So it was remarked of Saul, as a proof of his conversion; and thus we say, with wonder and surprise, of the thief—Behold he prayeth! Perhaps he never prayed before, or he had long forgotten to pray. Had he prayed, he had not come to the cross; he had not been a thief; for, according to the Dutch proverb, 'Praying will make a man leave sinning, or sinning will make a man leave praying.' Now he prays; and, most wonderful! prays to him who hung upon a cross. He becomes a Christian at once, for a Christian is one who with

the heart 'believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth maketh confession (of that faith) unto salvation.' Rom. x. 10.

He calls Jesus LORD, which no man can do aright 'but by the Holy Ghost.' He gives him this title of dignity and authority, though degraded by the whole Jewish nation, and branded with the name of a rebel, a Samaritan, an impostor.

He owns him also as a *King*: for he begs to be remembered by Jesus 'when he shall come into his *kingdom*.' You know the title that Pilate put over his head on the cross, was *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews*; and it was put there to intimate his crime, in assuming the character of king, in opposition to Cæsar; but he was really a king—he came into the world to be a king—to set up a new and spiritual kingdom, in opposition, not to Cæsar, but to Satan, and this character he boldly avowed before Pilate. The penitent thief allows his claim, and begs to be admitted among his subjects. He understands also, that 'Christ's kingdom is not of this world,' as the Jews foolishly thought the kingdom of Messiah was to be; and this was their fatal mistake: for, on this account, they rejected the humble Lord of glory. They despised his mean appearance; they saw 'no form, nor any beauty, that they should regard him; he was not accounted in the number of men. 'He was despised, and they esteemed him not.' Isa. liii. 2, 3. But the faith of the thief broke through the clouds which obscured his real dignity; and 'beheld the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.'

He pays him the just honour of having Heaven at his disposal, according to what our Lord afterwards declared, 'I am he that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell,' or rather, *the unseen world*, including both Heaven and Hell. Rev. i. 18. The dying thief believed this, and his prayer was the language of faith, a confidential address to the Saviour.

Observe also the *modesty* of his application. *Remember* me: not *prefer* me to honour in thy kingdom, as the two ambitious disciples had formerly requested; but, simply, *remember me;* he does not dictate how, or in what manner; he leaves it all to the Lord; but he commits his cause, his soul, to Christ; and, no doubt, with some degree of that satisfaction which St. Paul expressed in the view of death, 'I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.' 2 Tim. i. 12. It was a request like that which Joseph made to the butler (Gen. xl. 14.) '*Think on me*, when it shall be well with thee; yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him.' The poor thief succeeded better; he was remembered, and saved; for Jesus never said to any soul, 'Seek me, in vain.' 'Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

As the case of this man was singular and extraordinary, so he gave very singular and extraordinary proofs of his *sincerity*. The professions of repentance and faith, first made in the hour of distress and in the prospect of death, are often uncertain, and may justly be suspected. Too many, who, in the expectation of death, have seemed to be much in earnest, and gave great hope to Christian friends of a real change, have proved by their conduct, when they recovered, that they were not sincere; for the vilest of men generally respect religion in their dying hours. But the penitent thief was enabled to give the most satisfactory evidence of sincerity; and the answer of Christ to him puts it beyond a doubt. Observe now the marks of his sincerity;—

1. *He reproves sin* in his comrade, especially his sin in reviling Christ—'Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?' Persecutors of Christ, in his person, or in his members, awfully prove their want of the fear of God; and every sin is greatly aggravated by that hardness of

heart which persists in it, even in the time of sore affliction. True repentance will always occasion a sincere hatred to sin. True grace will ever make a man feel for others. The love of God and the love of man are always united. The true penitent will say, with penitent David, 'Then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee.' Ps. li. 13.

2. *He condemns himself,* and admits the justice of God, and of the magistrate, in bringing him to the fatal tree—*We suffer justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds*—shameful and painful as our death is, it is no more than we deserve. A just sense of sin, will make a sufferer patient. He will say, 'Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and clear when thou judgest.' Ps. li. 4.

3. *He vindicates Christ*—'But this man hath done nothing amiss.' The Jewish courts had condemned him to death as the vilest of miscreants, and the whole multitude had cried, 'Crucify him, crucify him!' but the thief, more honest and better taught than they, justifies his whole character; and truly says, 'he hath done nothing amiss.' Thus, in the face of all his infamous and powerful slanderers, he declares the innocence of Jesus, who was, indeed, 'holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.'

Thus was clearly manifested the reality of that great and gracious change which had taken place in his heart. He was evidently enlightened in the knowledge of Christ; he was convinced of his sin and misery, he was humbled for it; he reproved sin in his neighbour; he honoured the character of Christ; he owned him as Lord, and King, and Saviour; and he committed his departing spirit into his faithful hands. What wonders of grace were crowded into this small space, enabling him, in a few minutes, to give more glory to Christ than many do in the whole course of their lives!

II. Let us now proceed to consider the gracious

answer of our Saviour to his dying request. *And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.*

Recollect, my friends, the situation of our Lord when he made this answer. Call to mind his personal sufferings at the moment. Behold him naked upon the cross. He that clothed the heavens with stars, the earth with flowers, and man with raiment, is despoiled of all his garments, and hangs exposed to the scorn of the rude mob. Great was the torment of crucifixion. First stretched and racked upon the cross, while it lay on the ground; then nailed to it through the palms of his hands, and the soles of his feet with exquisite torture; the tree being elevated, is by a violent concussion settled in the ground; while every joint and sinew is painfully distended, and his whole weight borne by the wounded parts. But 'the sufferings of his soul, were the soul of his sufferings.' A sense of his Father's wrath, and the burthen of the sins of the world, now lay heavy upon his soul. Darkness that might be felt, filled his holy mind; and, in the agony of his spirit, he cries aloud, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

Remember, it was during this inexpressible grief, that the Lord of life vouchsafes this gracious answer. Excessive pain or grief, usually prevents our care for others; but the agonies of our Saviour lessened not his compassion for the sons of men. From the moment of his last visit to Jerusalem, when he 'wept over it,' until he gave up the ghost, tender pity to sinful men vented itself in the most affectionate accents. Witness his parting discourse, and pathetic prayer after the passover;—witness his kind apology for his sleeping disciples; witness his direction to the sympathizing females—'Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.' Witness his intercession for his murderers: 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' And now, upon the first application of this poor abandoned sinner, he instantly complies with his request, and

grants him 'exceeding abundantly above all he could ask or think.'

How readily does God regard the sinner's cry! With speed like that which winged the feet of the prodigal's aged father, who no sooner beheld at a distance his long-lost, but now returning son, but 'while he was yet a great way off, had compassion, and ran and fell upon his neck and kissed him.' God is slow to anger, but quick to mercy—ready to forgive. He discerns the first motion of the soul heaven ward, and while the sinner is 'yet speaking' in prayer, the prayer is heard and answered.

Observe the substance of the answer—a place in paradise—Christ's company there—immediately, 'to-day;' and the solemn assurance of the whole, 'Verily I say unto thee,' it shall be so.

A place in *paradise* is promised: a place in *hell* was his desert, and would have been his portion had he died in the same state as he was half-an-hour before. Heaven is here called 'Paradise,' in allusion to the garden of Eden, which the Lord God himself planted, and in which he put the man he had formed. By sin, Adam soon lost his garden and his God. 'He drove out the man.' By the first Adam paradise is lost; by the second Adam, the Lord from Heaven, paradise is regained; a far better paradise; a garden from whence the blessed inhabitant shall never be driven out. 'Here grows the Rose of Sharon, and the Lily of the valley. Here flourishes the plant of Renown; here the unforbidden tree of knowledge, and the unguarded tree of life.' No subtle serpent annoys this happy spot, any more to seduce; nor shall the free will of man betray him to ruin again.

Jesus promises to the penitent the enjoyment of *his own company there*—'This day shalt thou be *with me* in Paradise.' Christ then was going, not to hell, to redeem the damned, as some have supposed, but to heaven! where he assures the thief he shall also be. It is the presence of Christ that makes Heaven

so glorious and happy. With this he consoled his mourning friends, John xiv. 2, 3. 'I am going to prepare a place for you; and I will come again, and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.' Amazing favour,—to be with Christ! This is enough. He asked a bare remembrance, as if distant; Jesus promises his own immediate presence.

And *how quickly* was this to be enjoyed! 'To-day.' He had prayed—'Lord, remember me *when* thou comest into thy kingdom.' He knew not when that might be; perhaps he thought of some very distant time. Christ says, 'To-day.' How short and speedy was this man's journey to glory! in the morning he was posting to hell; in the evening he is with Christ in Heaven. This Scripture teaches us a pleasant truth, namely, that there is no interval between the time of our departure from this world by death, and our admission into the realms of glory. Some have dreamed that the soul sleeps till the resurrection; but Christ assures the thief, and assures *us* by the same word, of an immediate entrance into Heaven; that so, being 'absent from the body,' we may be 'present with the Lord.'

Of all this, Jesus vouchsafes the most solemn assurance; he adds his usual asseveration, 'Verily.' Perhaps he saw some rising doubts in the sinner's mind. The blessing promised was so vast and unexpected; he might feel so much his own vileness and unworthiness, as to fear he should not obtain it; but to put the matter out of all doubt, Christ adds a kind of oath to his promise, that so this 'heir of promise might have strong consolation.' And is not the Scripture full of similar assurances, 'that whosoever believeth in Jesus shall not perish, but have everlasting life?' Yea, more: 'he that believeth *hath*,' even now, 'hath everlasting life; and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from

death unto life.'—'Wherefore then dost thou doubt, O thou of little faith?'

APPLICATION.

1. Beware of abusing this glorious instance of free grace. Many have been very cautious of speaking of it, and have rather laboured to obscure its glory, by studying to find out something good in the character of the thief; lest this example of grace purely free, and granted at the last hour, should have a dangerous tendency, and encourage men to defer their repentance; presumptuously hoping to be saved at the last moment, like the thief. But a sober consideration of the matter may prevent this abuse; while we must take care to do nothing to diminish the glory of divine grace, in this instance so illustriously displayed. It has been often and justly observed, 'We have but *one* such instance recorded in all the Bible: *one* sinner converted at the hour of death, that we may hope; and *but* one, that we may fear.' And suppose it had once happened that a person had leaped down from a lofty precipice without losing his life, would it be prudent for ten thousand other people to run the risk, and leap down after him? Dreadfully hazardous indeed it is for men to presume on a death-bed repentance. 'Repentance is the gift of God; he is bound to bestow it at no time; and can it be reasonably expected at the close of a life of sin and rebellion? Let it be considered how many die suddenly, without a moment's warning; how many die on their beds, who are so flattered by their disorder or their friends, that they have no expectation at all of death. Others die in the delirium of a fever; or are otherwise disabled by extreme agony or weakness for serious reflection. And some die hardened, like the other thief on the cross; for in general men die as they live.

But, 2. Behold and admire the grace of God! Salvation is always of grace. Surely it was so in this

instance. Sin, indeed, abounded, but grace superabounded. Whosoever is saved, must be saved on the very same terms as the thief was; 'Justified freely by God's grace, through the redemption that is in Christ;'—'without money and without price;' 'not of works, lest any man should boast.' Boasting is always excluded in salvation, whoever is the subject of it. How eminently so here! *Who* was it that made one thief to differ from the other? Bishop Hall says, 'Lord, he could not have spoken this *to* thee, but *by* thee. What possibility was there for a thief to think of thy kingdom without thy Spirit? That good Spirit of thine breathed upon *this* man, breathed *not* upon his fellow; their trade was alike; their state alike; their sins were alike; their cross alike; *only* thy mercy makes them *unlike:* one is taken, the other left. Blessed be thy *mercy*, in taking one! Blessed be thy *justice*, in leaving the other! Who can despair of *that mercy?* Who can but tremble at *that justice?*'

Let every sinner, who reads or hears this, know *he* needs mercy just as much as this criminal. 'But, I am not a thief,' says one. Perhaps you have not robbed *man;* but have you not robbed *God?* Have you not defrauded him of 'the glory due to his name? Have you not robbed him of the Sabbath, a portion of time which he demands for his own service. Have you not embezzled his talents, which were given you to trade with, for the purposes of his honour, and your own salvation?' Boast not, then, that you 'have paid every *man* his own,' when you have, in a thousand instances, defrauded the blessed God of his due. See, then, the necessity of mercy, and dread the thought of a double condemnation, the one for *sin* and the other for *unbelief.*

May the goodness of God so divinely displayed in this instance, draw thee to repentance. Jesus Christ 'came to seek and to save that which was lost.' This was always his character, and he maintained it to the last. His enemies reproached him

for it; and they called him 'The Friend of Sinners;' so he was; but not the friend of sin. Blessed be his name, he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' He casts out none that come. O come and try him! What encouragement is here for him 'that is ready to perish;' who has a world of guilt, and not a grain of worthiness! Say with the dying thief, 'Lord, remember me, now thou art in thy kingdom,' and he will find a place in paradise for you, even for you.

This prayer will suit the Christian all his days—Lord, remember me! When guilt recurs,—when temptations assault,—when troubles arise,—look to the Saviour. He who 'remembered thee in thy low estate,' will not forget thee now. Like the high priest of old, he bears the names of all his people on his heart; and, though even a tender mother may forget her sucking child, yet he protests he will remember thee. In return, go thou and remember him.

SERMON XXXVIII.

LUKE XX. 35, 36.

But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: neither can they die any more; for they are equal unto the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.

IT may justly excite our wonder and our grief, that believers who are professed candidates for another world, should have their hearts so little set upon their heavenly home. The glory that shall be revealed, and which faith humbly expects, is so exceedingly great, that one should suppose the children of God would scarcely be able to think or speak of any thing else. But, alas! it is not so. 'Our soul cleaveth to the dust,' and we have abundant cause to pray, 'Quicken thou us according to thy word.' May the Lord for this purpose bless our meditations on this passage of Scripture, in which Jesus Christ replies to the objections of the Sadducees against the doctrine of the resurrection! The Sadducees were the disciples of Sadoc, and composed one of the four sects of the Jews; their leading notion was, that 'there is no resurrection' (v. 27); they also denied the existence of angels, the immortality of the soul, and a future state. The Sadducees thought to perplex the doctrine of the resurrection, by proposing the case of a woman who had been married to seven different men. 'In the resurrection,' said they, 'whose wife of them is she?' Our Lord

mildly answered this impertinent question, by shewing that there is a vast difference between the state of men on earth, and that of the children of God in Heaven; a great difference between this world and that world. The whole passage is full of instruction, which we shall endeavour to obtain, by making several observations upon it.

Observe, I. That there is *another* world.

Our Lord calls it *that* world. It is evidently opposed to '*this* world' (ver. 34): 'the children of *this world.*' We know a little of *this* world. O that we knew it aright! O that we saw it with the eyes of faith! We should then confess it to be *a vain world;* 'for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.' Solomon, who made a full trial of the world with advantages for making it above all other men, solemnly pronounces the whole to be 'vanity of vanities; vanity of vanities, and vexation of spirit.' How emphatically is it expressed! as if his heart was full of the idea; as if he longed to impress it upon others; as if he could not find sufficient words to do it. And remember *who* it was that declared this. Not a hermit who never saw the world: not a pauper, who has got nothing in the world: not a spendthrift, who has lost all he had in the world: but 'the king of Jerusalem,' who abounded in wealth and honour, and who had tried the whole round of worldly pleasures. If *he* pronounces all to be vanity, *we* need not make the fruitless experiment; for 'what shall the man do who cometh after the king?'

This world is as *wicked* as it is vain. 'This present *evil world,*' St. Paul calls it; 'The world that lieth in the wicked one,' saith St. John. 'It was *good,* when God first made it, very good;' but sin has made it evil; filled it with snares and sorrows; insomuch that it is a part of Christ's redemption 'to deliver us from this present evil world;' and from Satan, 'the prince of this world; who makes

use of its pleasures as baits, to destroy the souls of men. And yet, such is the evil heart of man, that he dotes upon this evil world: he seeks 'his good things in this world;'—'his portion is in this life;' 'he is a man of the world;' or, as Christ says, ver. 34, 'a child of this world.'

But there is *another world.* Solemn truth! generally admitted, but little regarded. O think of it, you who trifle away your precious time. There is another world; and though you forget it, you are hastening towards it every moment. Yes! there is another world. Jesus Christ, who came from it, and who is gone to it again; Jesus Christ assures us of it. 'He has brought life and immortality *to light*;' he has made a plain revelation of it in the gospel, which shews us the *certainty* of it; the sublime, excellent, and spiritual *nature* of it, as in our text; together with the true and only *way* of obtaining eternal life, which is by Jesus Christ. Our Lord, in his public discourses, often spoke of another world, of Heaven, and of hell, very plainly, very familiarly, very solemnly; urging his hearers, by arguments drawn from eternity, to regard the things which belonged to their peace.

The world of which we speak is a world of *light*, and *purity*, and *joy*. 'There is no night there.' Hell is eternal darkness; Heaven eternal light. No ignorance, no errors, no mistakes; but the knowledge of God in Christ begun on earth is there completed; for 'we shall know even as we are known.' The heavenly world is all *purity* and holiness. Nothing retaining the defilement of sin can have admission there; only 'the pure in heart shall see God.' And their *joy*, which also commenced on earth in the possession of 'spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus,' shall be full, uninterrupted, and everlasting. 'God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.'

Such is *that world* which our Lord here speaks of; and it is the grand object of faith. Believers in all ages have kept it in view. Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob lived and died in the faith of it; they desired '*a heavenly country*,' and in the hope of it, were dead to this world; 'confessing themselves strangers and pilgrims on earth.' The apostles, 'having the same spirit of faith,' looked intently (like archers who fix their eyes on the mark), but not at the things which are seen; their object was nothing visible and sensible; but they 'looked at the things unseen;' they seriously regarded, and carefully aimed at heavenly things, as the grand mark, the noble prize of their high calling in Christ Jesus.

And is this the character of real Christians? Stop a moment, and ask, Is it yours? Amidst the unavoidable labours and the lawful pleasures of this world, is Heaven the principal object; or do you wholly forget it? It has scarcely ever a place in your thoughts; and can you suppose you shall ever enjoy glory without seeking it? Be not deceived, for,

Observe, II. It will be a great matter *to obtain* that world.

Notice our Saviour's words, 'they which shall be accounted worthy to *obtain* that world.' O it will be a great matter to obtain that world! Surely men do not believe there is such a world; for faith, of any sort, will work. What is it sets the world of men in motion; what makes them so busy from morning to night? Is it not the belief that they shall obtain something worth their pains? Why then are no pains taken to obtain Heaven? Infidelity lies at the bottom of their sloth, or people would seek Heaven as diligently as they seek this present world. 'So run,' saith St. Paul, 'that ye may obtain.' 'Know ye not,' saith he, 'that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run that ye may obtain.' 1 Cor. ix. 24. The Christian life is a race, and Heaven is the prize; and a race implies motion, vehement motion, and continued motion. O let us be

in good earnest for Heaven. Lazy wishes and formal religion will not do. Christ represents it as a great thing to obtain that world.

It will be a matter of amazing *grace* and favour. Labour we must;—yet, after all, it is a matter of pure mercy, for the 'gift of God is eternal life!' Every glorified saint will be filled with surprise, and be ready to say, Lord is it I?

> 'How can it be, thou heav'nly King,
> That thou should'st me to glory bring?
> Make slaves the partners of thy throne,
> Deck'd with a never-fading crown!'

And O, what a matter of infinite *joy* will it be! If angels rejoice at the conversion of a sinner, it is because they foresee its final result; the foundation is laid, and they rejoice to think they shall witness the top-stone laid also, and shall 'shout, Grace! Grace! unto it.' Yea, the blessed Redeemer himself shall rejoice, 'when he sees the travail of his soul;' he will reckon all his pains and sorrows, and sufferings amply recompensed, when he beholds the millions of his elect safely brought to glory.

O then, let the obtaining of that world be our first business in this. So Christ directs,—'Seek *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness;' let care for Heaven precede all other cares: seek it *first;* seek it early in life, and seek it early every morning. Seek it earnestly as the chief thing, 'for what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?' Heaven is all; and heaven will make amends for all.

Observe, III. Some kind of *worthiness* is necessary to the obtaining of that world,—'they which shall be accounted *worthy* to obtain that world.'

This worthiness includes *merit* and *meetness;* or, a *title* to glory, and a *fitness* for it. Both these are necessary. But where shall we look for merit? Not in man. Man is a sinner, and a sinner merits only Hell, for 'the wages of sin is death.'—'All

men have sinned and come short of the glory of God.' The best man in the world can lay no claim to heaven; if he could, there would be room for boasting: 'but boasting is excluded.'—'No flesh shall glory in his presence.' If any man glory, it must be in the Lord. It is the merit; or more properly speaking, the righteousness of Christ, which is the believer's title to Heaven. This, like the wedding garment in the parable, is the only dress in which a sinner can appear before God, or sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

But there is a *meetness* or *fitness* for that world, which is equally necessary. St. Paul gives thanks to God, Col. i. 12, 'Who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.' Observe, Heaven is for saints, that is, *sanctified persons;* and they who are not saints on earth, will never be saints in Heaven. All who are designed for Heaven hereafter, are prepared for Heaven now. Only those who are sanctified shall be glorified. And this is evident to common sense. Every creature has its proper element. The fish cannot fly in the air, nor the bird swim in the water. And how can we suppose that the man who drinketh in iniquity like water, can be fit to be with angels and the spirits of just men made perfect, where all is pure and holy? A good man who was dying, said, 'I shall change my place, but not my company.' Let them think of this, whose chosen company is the profane, and the lewd. O how vain are the hopes which many persons entertain of future happiness! In vain the proud Pharisee, who talks of his good heart and his good works, expects a place among the redeemed; for their song is not, 'worthy is self;' but 'worthy is the Lamb that was slain, who hath redeemed us to God by his blood.' As vain are the hopes of the carnal and worldly man, whose affections cleave to earth, who lives in the love and practice of known iniquity, whose inmost soul abhors the spiritual life, who accounts the Sabbath a burthen, and who lives

'without Christ in the world.' Know, O vain man, thy hope is folly and presumption, and hear what Christ has declared with a double *Verily*,—'Except a man be born again, he *cannot* see the kingdom of God.' John iii. 3.

But thrice happy are they who are prepared for Heaven; who are 'born of the Spirit,' and made spiritual in the frame of their mind; whose hearts are weaned in some degree from earthly things; who possess the world as though they possessed it not; who have desires and affections suited to the work and delight of Heaven: 'He who hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God;' these are 'the first fruits of the Spirit,' the foretaste of Heaven; and those who enjoy it shall be 'accounted worthy to obtain that world.'

Observe, IV. That the relations of the present world will not subsist in the world to come; our Lord says, *They neither marry, nor are given in marriage.*

This expression is not intended to disparage that kind of union; for marriage was ordained by God himself, while yet our first parents retained their original innocence. This relation is the first that subsisted between human beings; it is the source of all other relations, and superior to them all; for, 'for this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother, and cleave unto his wife.' And our Lord was so far from discouraging marriage, that he graced a marriage feast with his presence, and wrought his first miracle there.

But in Heaven this relation will cease; because the purposes for which it was instituted will also cease. There will be no death in Heaven; consequently no vacancies, such as death here makes, to be filled up. In this world, 'one generation passeth away, and another cometh.' The world is like an inn, where travellers take a hasty refreshment, and are gone; while a succession of new travellers occupy their places. Where are the former inhabitants

of this place? They are mingled with the dust; the places which knew them, know them no more; we who are present supply their room; and in a short time, another generation shall succeed us. But the inhabitants of Heaven dwell in a 'continuing city,' 'a house not made with hands, whose builder and maker is God;' yea, they are like 'pillars in his temple, and shall no more go out.'

The blessed God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, has been pleased to appoint marriage as a remedy against fornication, that natural desires might not become brutal, but be under direction and control. Alas! what abominations spring from the neglect of this remedy! What impurities, what excesses, what poverty, what disease, what infamy, what bloodshed, what misery, have abounded in the world by the unbridled lusts of the sexes! And O, how few consider, that 'for all these things, God will bring them into judgment!' But in the heavenly world, those who were on earth purified in measure, shall be perfectly pure; the body of sin and death shall also be purged in the grave; and no disorderly passions, nor sensual appetites, shall ever molest them again.

Nor shall the glorified need the aid of that domestic friendship and comfort which result from the married state, and which are well suited to our embodied condition; for even in paradise the Creator judged 'it was not good for man to be alone.' But in Heaven there will be no occasion for the lesser streams of happiness, when believers have arrived at the fountain. In that blessed state, 'The tabernacle of God shall be with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.' Rev. xxi. 3. And it is added, (ver. 23), 'the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it, for the glory of the Lord did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.' God, in Christ, will be the everlasting fountain of knowledge and joy; so that the aid of creature comforts shall

no more be wanted than the light of a candle at noon-day.

O let us learn from hence to sit loose to all creatures, and creature comforts; 'It remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away.' 1 Cor. vii. 29.

Observe, V. In that world *death* will be for ever abolished.

This is a dying world. We are placed as in a field of battle, our relations and neighbours are falling all around us, so that we may almost say—'Where is the earth that hath not been alive?' Death is to mortals 'the king of terrors.' Many thoughtless creatures, indeed, will hardly allow themselves to think of it; but, when it approaches, what agonies and terrors seize their souls; sin is neither pardoned nor subdued, and preparation for eternity is not begun. Even some of the timid flock of Christ, weak in the faith, act inconsistently with the glorious gospel they profess; too much in bondage through fear of death. But *Christ has abolished death.* 2 Tim. i. 10. He hath taken away its sting, and changed its very nature, turning the curse into a blessing; and, as to the second death, far more dreadful than the first, it is lost and gone for ever: *He that believeth shall never die—believest thou this?* John xi. 26. Instead of death, eternal life is the believer's portion; even now the Christian hath it, and it shall be perfected at the resurrection, when this mortal shall put on immortality. 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?'

Let this reconcile us to death. We shall die but once. It alleviates the distress of some bodily disorders, as the small pox for instance, that persons suffer them but once, and are not liable to have them again. It is a far greater satisfaction which

Christ affords us in our text, *Neither shall they die any more;* especially as death itself is also become a privilege: it is the gate of life, and ushers us into his presence, where 'there is fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore.'

Observe, VI. The blessed inhabitants of that world shall be like the angels; *they are equal to the angels.*

Angels are spiritual beings, not having bodies as we have, but possessing rational powers superior to ours. They are pure and holy beings, having never rebelled against God, as their fallen brethren, the devils, have; and as we, the children of men, have. They do the will of God with pleasure, and are the messengers of God's mercy to men; 'ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation.'

At present we are far inferior to angels, not only in our natural powers, but especially in holiness and purity. We inhabit a body of sin and death; and, by our connexion with a system of flesh and blood, are greatly hindered in our spiritual pursuits, and disposed to evil. Thus the apostle speaks (Rom. vii. 22, &c.) 'I delight in the law of God after the inward man (the renewed mind), but I see another law in my members, warring against the law in my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members;' and on this account he cries, 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!' And believers have daily cause to make the same complaint; 'For the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit, so that they cannot do the things that they would.' On this ground, our suffering Saviour kindly apologized for his sleeping disciples in the garden: 'The spirit is truly willing, but the flesh is weak.'

But our Lord here assures his people they shall be equal with the angels; they shall drop the clog of their mortal bodies, and lose the incumbrance of flesh and blood; no sensual appetites shall divert

their affections from spiritual objects; but, with the same agility and spirituality as the angels themselves, they shall serve their dear Lord day and night in his temple, and be supremely happy in the full enjoyment of God and the Lamb.

O let us endeavour to resemble angels now as much as possible! We are taught to pray, 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven;' and that we may do it, let us not indulge our sensual appetites too much; but, with St. Paul, 'bring our bodies into subjection, and keep them under.'

Observe, VII. The resurrection of the body will perfect the bliss of God's people; *they are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection; they shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead.*

The heavenly felicity of believers shall commence at the moment of death. No sooner are they 'absent from the body,' but they are 'present with the Lord;' but their bliss will not be consummated till the morning of the resurrection. In the prospect of this, holy Job says, *All the days of my appointed time* (that is, in the grave) *will I wait till my change come;* (glorious change will it be! for *the Lord will change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like his glorious body.*) *Thou shalt call,* saith he, *and I will answer thee;* (for the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God;) *thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands.* Job xiv. 14. The human body is the exquisite workmanship of God's hands; and being redeemed by Jesus Christ, as well as the soul, it shall be rescued from the power of the grave. Then *the creature,* the corporal part of the Christian, which had long been made subject to vanity, 'shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God.' This is the 'manifestation of the sons of God,' when they shall appear like themselves, and like the glorious Redeemer. This is also called 'the adoption.' Believers are now the adopted sons of God; but this

dignity is denied by the world, and sometimes obscured to themselves: but then God will own and publish it before all the world, and the matter will be put beyond dispute. Their bodies then shall be as much more glorious than those of the wicked, as their souls are now more gracious than theirs. And as Christ was, by his resurrection, 'declared to be the Son of God with power,' so shall his humble followers be. Rom. viii. 19—23.

Thus we have taken a distant view of the future world, of which so many useful hints are suggested in the text. Let us daily walk as expectants of another world. Let us remember it will be a great matter to obtain that world. Let us recollect what that worthiness is, which is requisite to the obtaining of it, namely, the righteousness of Christ, and the sanctifying influence of the Spirit. Let us remember, that human relations and connexions, however useful and comfortable at present, will cease at death; and that death itself shall also be abolished. Let us enjoy the thought of being holy, happy, and spiritual, like the blessed angels; and try to resemble them now in our cheerful and active obedience. Finally, in the prospect of a glorious resurrection, let us 'be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as we know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord.'

SERMON XXXIX.

GENESIS vii. 1.

Come, thou, and all thy house, into the Ark.

THIS is the gracious invitation which God gave to Noah, just before the flood came upon the world of the ungodly. The world had been formed about 1600 years, and the number of mankind was greatly multiplied; but wickedness also greatly increased, until the wrath of God was dreadfully kindled, and he determined upon the general destruction of sinners. 'And the Lord said, I will destroy man, whom I have created, from the face of the earth, for it repenteth me that I have made him.' But Noah, who, amidst the general depravity, was righteous and pious, 'found grace in the eyes of the Lord.' To him he made known his design an hundred-and-twenty years before the flood: and directed him to build an immense vessel, like the hulk of a ship, in which himself and his family should be preserved. Noah believed and obeyed. The Ark was ready, and the deluge was at hand. 'Then the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou, and all thy house, into the Ark.' Noah entered. The Lord shut him in. The flood prevailed. Mankind was destroyed. Noah and his family continue a year in the Ark in safety, are then released from their confinement, and become the founders of a new world.

There is much instruction to be gathered from this affecting history; and it affords a lively type, or emblem, of the salvation that is in Christ for perishing

sinners. It is still the determination of the holy God to punish the ungodly. He gives them warning, and allows them time and space for repentance. He has also provided an ark for the preservation of those who foresee their danger; and, by the gospel, he invites sinners to fly to this refuge. Happy they, who like Noah, believe and obey, and are saved! For the sake of order and of memory, we shall divide our discourse into three parts, and observe,

I. There is a deluge of wrath coming upon sinners.

II. There is an ark provided for preservation.

III. God graciously invites sinners to come into it.

I. There is a dreadful deluge of wrath coming upon the ungodly. Sin only was the cause of the flood in Noah's time, and sin will bring upon every impenitent unpardoned soul a more dreadful punishment. 'By one man sin entered into the world,' and that man lived long enough to witness its rapid growth: he lived to see the world peopled with men, and overrun with wickedness. But in the family of *Seth*, from which it was designed that the Saviour should come, the fear and worship of God was long preserved. While these continued separate from the posterity of Cain, there was a seed to serve the Lord; but at length this distinction ceased: for 'the sons of God (the children of Seth) saw the daughters of men (the posterity of Cain) that they were fair, and they took them wives of all which they chose.' The professors of religion married the profane; they were 'unequally yoked with unbelievers;' and what was the consequence? Iniquity increased faster than ever. 'The bad will sooner debauch the good, than the good reform the bad.' Wickedness became triumphant, and many seem to have been giants in sin as well as in size. 'And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil con-

tinually.'—'The earth, also, was corrupt before God; and the earth was full of violence, for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.' The Lord, who saw all this, was greatly displeased; and, speaking after the manner of men, 'he repented that he had made man, and it grieved him at his heart.' The blessed God cannot be disturbed by an uneasy passion; but these expressions signify his extreme displeasure against sin and sinners; they shew that sin is most odious to his holiness, and sinners most obnoxious to his justice. Being thus provoked to anger, he said, 'My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is *flesh;*' that is, wholly fleshly, carnally minded, entirely sensual, sunk in fleshly lust. He therefore determined on the utter destruction of all mankind by an universal deluge. Yet he is pleased to give warning of it, and suspend the threatened ruin for one hundred-and-twenty years, which, as men then lived about nine hundred years, was such a reprieve to them as nine or ten years would be to us.

Men and brethren, sin is the same evil and destructive thing now that it was then. God is equally angry with sinners; und though he does not generally execute his wrath upon them in this world, yet he will assuredly do it in the world to come. Hear what the holy, fiery law of God saith to every transgressor, (Gal. iii. 10) *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.* The condition of life by the law is personal, perpetual, perfect obedience to all its commands, doing all things required, and doing them always, without one omission, without one transgression. A single failure, even in thought, spoils a whole life of obedience, and incurs the curse. You will say then, Upon these terms, who can be saved? We answer none. 'By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified.' It is a vain thing therefore to look for life by the law, or our good works, as they are called; if ever we escape the curse, it must

be through faith in Jesus Christ, 'who hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.' The whole book of God is full of threatenings against sin. It declares that 'the wicked shall be turned into hell;' that 'If the wicked turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow and made it ready; he hath prepared the instruments of death.' Psalm vii. 11, 12. What awful words are these! You tremble to see a criminal just ready for execution: behold, the instruments of eternal death are ready;—and this is your own case at this very moment, if you are yet in your sins. 'The wrath of God abideth upon you;' and the longer you live in sin, the more you are 'treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.'

How merciful was God in giving warning to the old world. His servant Noah was a preacher of righteousness. The Spirit of Christ was in him; and by this Spirit he preached to the disobedient and rebellious sinners of that time, as St. Peter speaks: (1 Peter iii. 19, 20) *By which* (Spirit) *he went and preached to the spirits in prison; which some time were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing.* Christ, by his Spirit in Noah, was the preacher. The hearers were the wicked people of the world in Noah's days; but when Peter wrote this they were *spirits*—disembodied spirits *in prison*, that is, in the prison of hell; so that they were not only drowned, but damned. This passage, therefore, does not mean that they were in prison when Christ preached to them, as the Papists pretend: but Christ, by his Spirit, preached to them on earth; yet, alas! to no purpose. Noah might say with the apostles and others, 'Who hath believed our report?' They were disobedient; they did not regard the merciful warning; and very probably despised and ridiculed Noah for his faith, his preaching, and his building. Thousands would come to see the ark, and ask him what

it was for; they would ask him whether he meant to sail on dry land? or, where so much water must come from as would drown the world? Such a thing, they would say, is quite contrary to reason,—such a thing never was, nor can ever be; and no doubt they would say, Noah was righteous overmuch, and religion had turned his brain.

In the very same manner the merciful warnings of God are treated to this day. Serious religion is despised. Holiness is accounted needless preciseness; and *the terrors of the Lord*, by which we would persuade men, are reckoned idle bugbears, fit only to alarm weak people and children. Thus unbelief tends to eternal ruin and destruction: for no person will fly from the wrath to come, who does not believe wrath is coming; who does not believe God, who says it is coming. But this very unbelief fulfils the Scriptures. St. Peter says, 'In the last days there shall be *scoffers* walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.' But this is false. The world was once destroyed by water, and it shall be again by fire. Not only does the Scripture assure us of the deluge, but almost all nations retain a tradition of it; and we may see the traces of it with our own eyes. The trees which are found in the bowels of the earth; and the shells and bones of fishes dug out of the mountains remote from the sea, are ocular proofs of this event. But sin hardens the hearts of men, and they will not believe till they feel. Our Saviour tells us it will be just the same at the day of judgment. Matt. xxiv. 37, &c. 'But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be;—for as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark; and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.'

They knew not—mark the expression! *They knew not.* How could they help knowing, when they were told of it for near one hundred-and-twenty years? The meaning is—*they believed not.* They might have known, but they would not know; they would not believe; they reasoned themselves out of it. Just so do sinners now. They love sin, and they will not believe that God will punish it; which is, in fact, saying that God is a liar, and will not do as he has said. They were secure, because they were sensual; they were eating and drinking, minding the things that were seen, and so neglecting the things that were not seen.

Nevertheless, 'the flood came, and took them all away.'—'If we believe not, God abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself.'—'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but his word shall not pass away.' Whatever God threatens or promises is sure to come to pass. The flood came. Then they saw what they would not believe. The day of mercy was ended. There was no hope for them,—No means of escape; but they miserably perished in the mighty waters.

Let us now turn our eyes from this dreadful scene, to contemplate the goodness of God towards Noah and his family; let us consider,

II. The ark provided for his preservation.

God himself devised this means of safety. He directed him to build a vessel of immense size, and pointed out all the dimensions of it. Proper rooms were to be made for his family, and others for a small remnant of all other creatures, who were thus to be preserved from the universal desolation.*

Thus the salvation of the church is by a plan of

* Infidels have pretended that the ark was not big enough to hold all the creatures, &c., but it appears from the calculations of learned men that it was amply sufficient. It was about 550 feet long, 90 feet wide, and 50 feet high; so that it contained near 42,000 tons of lading, and would hold more than 40 of our ships of 1,000 tons each. It was nearly as long as St. Paul's church in London. And if all the animals together, as the learned have computed, would not be equal to 500 horses, there would surely be room enough, and to spare.

God's own contrivance. The method of salvation by Jesus Christ is wholly of God. It could never have entered in the heart of man. No human or angelic being could ever have thought of God's taking our nature into union with his own, or have devised the astonishing plan of redemption by the blood of his Son. So remote is this method from the wisdom of man, that he calls it 'Foolishness;' but it is 'the wisdom of God;' yea, 'the manifold wisdom of God' is therein displayed; and it will be the admiration of saints and angels to all eternity.

As fallen man is totally ruined, it is necessary that his restoration should be in such a way as to secure the whole glory of it to God alone;—and so it does. In the redemption of sinners by Jesus Christ, 'Grace reigns' from first to last. Grace devised the charming plan;—Grace gave Jesus the unspeakable gift. It is by grace we are called. By grace we are justified. We are sanctified by grace;—by grace we are preserved; and the top-stone of salvation, in the everlasting glory of the elect, shall be brought forth, shouting, Grace! Grace! unto it.

It was the same grace that selected Noah from the great mass of the profane and wicked of that day. The nature of Noah was no better than that of others, but grace made him to differ. It is said (Gen. vi. 8) 'Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.' The like expression is used concerning Lot. When Sodom was destroyed, he was delivered,—'the Lord being merciful to him.' The salvation of the best men must be ascribed to God's mercy, not their own merit. Onesiphorus was a good man; but St. Paul prayed for him, that he might find mercy of the Lord at the last day: and it will then be manifest, with respect to all the redeemed, that it was 'not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.' Rom. ix. 15, 16.

The ark afforded perfect security. Noah being forewarned of the approaching flood, and having received full instructions how to build the ark, believed

God and obeyed. St. Paul, treating of faith (Heb. xi.) mentions him as an eminent believer. 'By faith, Noah being warned of God, of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house, by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is of faith.' Here is the way of salvation. God warns. The Christian believes the warning. He fears the misery threatened: he flies to the refuge provided, and there he is safe.

Believing that God would do as he said, he began to build the ark. It was a work of great labour, but he did not shun it on that account. It was an unexampled thing; he had no precedent for it; and it required no small courage and resolution to persist in the work. Reason might hesitate, and form objections; but 'the Lord hath said it' was an answer to them all. The world would despise him, and treat him as a visionary romantic fool, who frightened himself, and wanted to frighten others with ungrounded danger; but the power of faith carried him through every difficulty, and at the appointed season he received the end of his faith, even the salvation of himself and family.

For now, the hundred-and-twenty years are just expired. The long expected day is just at hand—'for yet seven days, saith the Lord, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights, and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth.' Here was a fresh warning. While the time was distant they disregarded it. But now there was only a week to turn themselves in; and this week was spent like the rest. We do not hear of one person converted in the last week. The week is expired. And now the rain descends, not in drops, but in torrents; and not for a few hours, but for six weeks together without intermission. But not only were 'the windows of Heaven opened,' but 'the fountains of the great deep were broken up,—the great abyss of waters under

the earth, which hitherto God had confined by certain bounds, that they might not pass over to cover the earth.' Psalm civ. 9. But now these bounds are removed, and the water covers the surface of the land.

'Probably, many of the profane scoffers, when they saw the increasing violence of the waters, came wading middle deep to the ark, earnestly craving admittance; but as they formerly rejected God, now they are justly rejected by him. Ere vengeance begins, repentance is seasonable; but if judgment be once gone out, we cry too late. While the gospel solicits us, the doors of the ark are open; if we neglect the time of grace, in vain we seek it with tears. God holds it no mercy to pity the obstinate. Others, more bold than they, hope to overrun the judgment; and climbing up to the high mountains, look down upon the waters with more hope than fear. And now, when they see their hills become islands, they climb up into the tallest trees; there, with paleness and horror, look for death, and study to avoid it, whom the waves overtake at last, half dead with famine, and half with fear. Lo! now from the tops of the mountains they descry the ark floating upon the water, and behold with envy that which before they beheld with scorn.'

In the mean time, Noah sits secure in the ark. The torrents of rain battering on the roof, the swelling of the waves which bore him up, the bellowing of the dying beasts, and the shrieks of the expiring multitude, create neither disturbance nor fear. He who 'shut him in,' had promised preservation; and while all was horror without, within all was safety, and peace, and praise.

And, who ever trusted in the Lord and was confounded? 'There is no condemnation to them who are *in Christ Jesus*, as Noah was in the ark. The law may thunder out its fearful curse,—Satan unwilling to lose his prey, may rage and roar,—the world, condemned by the believer's faith, as once by

Noah's, may frown, and fret, and persecute; but the believer is safe.

O how enviable to the distressed multitude was now the favoured situation of Noah. But, alas! it was too late. The same almighty hand which shut him in, had shut them out. Blessed be God, it is not so yet with any of us! The door of the ark is yet open; and the language of the gospel is, 'Come thou, and all thy house, into the ark.' This is what we are now to consider.

III. God graciously invites sinners to come into the ark.

When the mighty waters were fast increasing,—when no hope appeared from any other quarter, how would it have rejoiced the people to hear such an invitation as this: 'Come perishing men and women. Come into the ark. Come and bring all your dear little ones with you. Here is room enough, and to spare; and here you shall find a hearty welcome!'

They were not favoured thus; but *we* are called. 'Go ye forth into all the world,' said Christ to his disciples, 'and preach the gospel to every creature.' And what is this gospel, but good news of a refuge from the storm, and a covert from the tempest? Pardon, safety, and eternal life to every believer? So Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness: the people, stung by fiery serpents, beheld it and lived. So the Israelites in Egypt sprinkled their doors with blood, and the angel of death, who destroyed their enemies, beheld the peaceful sign, and preserved their lives. To this moment the gracious Redeemer is crying aloud by his word, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' Come into the ark, thou and all thy house. Parents, come not alone. Ask your sons and daughters to come along with you. They will be welcome, for Jesus still saith, 'Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven.' O may God make you and them willing to come into the ark!

APPLICATION.

How kind is God! Kind, in warning sinners so long beforehand of their dreadful danger. Kind, in providing an ark—in giving his Son to be a Saviour. Kind, in inviting perishing men to come and be saved by him. O praise the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever!

But are we aware of the danger? Do we really believe there is a deluge of wrath coming upon sinners? Here most men fail. Sin is so pleasant, they are unwilling to think it destructive. But who shall we believe, the God of truth, or the father of lies? See the fate of these unbelievers. They would not believe God, and were therefore secure; but the flood came, and took them all away. But Noah believed, was moved with fear, built an ark, and was saved. You have no ark to build:—it is built already. Yet a few days and the flood will come. Have not some large drops of affliction already fallen, to give you the necessary alarm? Lose no time then. The very beasts will hurry home when a storm is at hand. O seek a shelter in Jesus, and nowhere else! Neither the mountains nor the trees could save the unbelievers of old. Nor is there a saving name in Heaven or earth, but that of Jesus. Come thou then into the ark.

And what say the rest of your house? Shall the husband come, and the wife be shut out? or the wife enter, and the husband be excluded? Or, dear young people! shall your parents be safe in the ark, and you, their children, perish in the water? God forbid! O families, be concerned to be saved altogether. Come thou, and *all* thy house, into the ark; *servants* and all. If one be left behind, he perishes for ever. God make you willing to be saved.

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SERMON XL.

PHILIPPIANS III. 8.

The Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.

LIFE is short. It is a most serious reflection, *Life is short.* The weakness and folly of childhood, the vanity and vices of youth, the bustle and care of middle life, and the infirmities of old age, (if we live to be old) what do they leave us? A short life indeed!

Yet, a man has a soul of vast desires. He is capable of much, and aims at more. Many things he cannot attain, and many are not worth the pains. O, 'tis pity that man should not know how to choose the good and refuse the evil!—how to make the most and best of so short a life!

Now, there is an infallible guide. O that man would regard it! Once hath God spoken; yea, twice have I heard this:—What is the chief end, the first business, the true interest of man?

JOB was a man truly wise and eminently good; he had deeply considered the nature and value of wisdom; but, he inquires, Where is it to be got? Men know where to get gold and silver; and get them they will, if possible, though at the hazard of life. *But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding?* All nature falters in giving an answer;—but God himself vouchsafes to give it. *To man, he said,* perhaps to Adam the first man; however, to us, to every one of us he says, *The fear of the Lord, behold, that is wisdom: and to*

depart from evil, that is understanding. True religion is the true wisdom.

SOLOMON, deemed the wisest of men, speaks the same language; and thus concludes his book of dear-bought wisdom. *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter;* of what matter? The subject he proposed in the beginning of his book. What is the chief good? *What is that good for the sons of men which they should do all the days of their life?* (Eccl. ii. 3.) And here we have it:—*Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man;* or rather *the whole of man;* his highest wisdom, his proper duty, his true excellence, his best interest.

But a greater than Solomon is here. What saith JESUS, "the Wisdom of God," Wisdom incarnate! *This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent* (John xvii. 3.); as if he had said, The way to eternal life,—the earnest of it,—the evidence of right and title to it,—and the final enjoyment of it, consists in, and is connected with, the knowledge of the only true God, in opposition to all false gods: and in the right knowledge of Christ his Son, the only Mediator and Saviour, in opposition to every other mediator, or pretended way of acceptance with God.

In our text, St. Paul adds his testimony to the former; the testimony of his own experience. He was a man of learning, and had been a zealot for the Jewish law, a hater of Christ, and a bloody persecuter of his church; but grace had renewed his mind and changed his heart; he no longer boasted of his works, or went about to establish his own righteousness; but the law became his schoolmaster, to bring him to Christ; through the law, he became dead to the law; now he desires to be found in Christ, and depends alone upon his righteousness.

What things were *gain* to him, he counted *loss* for Christ; and that, not only after his first conversion, but many years after, when he wrote this epistle, he was still of the same mind. "Yea, doubtless," saith

he, "I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." He gladly parted with all his carnal confidence, all his former reputation, and all his worldly enjoyments, for this excellent knowledge; and thought himself an immense gainer by the change.

The true knowledge of Christ is as excellent as ever. We ought to value it as much as Paul did; and that we may do so, let us consider,

I. What this knowledge is, and,
II. The excellency of it.

I. Let us show what this knowledge is.

We may consider the knowledge of Christ as opposed to *Paganism*, to *Judaism*, and to the merely *notional religion* of formal professors.

The knowledge of Christ stands opposed to the ignorance of the heathen. "The world by wisdom knew not God." (1 Cor. i. 21.) The wisest Pagans, by their natural light and boasted philosophy, did not attain a true knowledge of God, and the way of salvation; "they became vain in their imaginations; and their foolish hearts were darkened." Witness, not only their altar "to the unknown God," but also the multitude of idols they worshipped! the absurd notions they entertained of their gods! and the horrid, bloody, and obscene rites of their worship!

The knowledge of Christ is to be distinguished from the knowledge of the law of Moses. "The law came by Moses; but grace and truth by Jesus Christ." The religion of the Jews consisted much in rites and ordinances, which were obscure, compared with the religion of the Gospel. They had "the shadow of good things to come;" we have the substance.

This knowledge is also something far superior to the speculative, unsanctified notions of nominal Christians, "who profess they know God but in works deny him;" who have "the form of godliness, but deny the power;" "who name the name of

Christ, but depart not from iniquity;" and to whom Christ will say "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, I never knew you." That knowledge which Paul so much prized was truly valuable and useful, and, indeed, includes the whole of true vital religion. We may define it to be

A spiritual, supernatural, experimental, and *practical* knowledge of Christ, in his person, character, and work; as revealed in the Gospel.

It is *spiritual.* It is the work of the Spirit of God to communicate it:—"God shines into the heart." Believers have "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ;" (Eph. i.) and the words which he speaks to the soul "are spirit and life:" "it is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing." John vi. 63.

It is therefore *supernatural;* it is above nature. No man can give it; no natural man can receive it. We are assured, 1 Cor. ii. 14, that *the natural man* (that is, the animal or rational man; he who acts only upon principles of reason) *receiveth not the things of the spirit of God;* that is, he does not embrace and approve them; *for they are foolishness to him:* through the darkness, pride, sensuality, and depravity of his mind, he cannot reconcile them to his own mistaken views of things; and therefore condemns them as weak, irrational, and enthusiastic: the apostle adds, *Neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned:* for want of a renewed faculty he cannot receive them; for they are perceived in their divine truth, beauty, and glory, only by an understanding illuminated and rectified by the Spirit of God. What an eminent instance of this was St. Paul himself! Before conversion, no man hated the Gospel more; after conversion no man loved it better; and, to this day, the change that takes place in the minds of men respecting gospel truth, is little less remarkable.

It is *experimental.* Believers "receive the love of the truth;" they "taste that the Lord is gra-

cious:" "as new-born babes, they desire the sincere milk of the word:" the faith which they mix with the word, gives a subsistence and reality to the truth in their minds; so that it greatly differs from a bare speculation; the truth is in them, and the truth makes them free. Once more,

It is *practical.* Knowledge in Scripture, is sometimes put for the whole of religion, and forms the grand distinction between the church and the world. Hence wicked men are often said "not to know the Lord:" as the sons of Eli, for instance, though they certainly had a speculative knowledge of the whole law. Knowledge often includes all its proper effects, as *assent* to the truth known; *affiance* in the person known; and that *love* to him, which secures obedience. Thus St. John speaks, 1 John ii. 3, 4, "He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; and hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments."

The knowledge we speak of, and which St. Paul so much commends, is the knowledge of CHRIST. Christ is the object of it; *Christ Jesus my Lord.* It is a principal part of this knowledge to have right views of him. Accordingly we find our Lord himself catechising his disciples upon this point (Matt. xvi. 13.) "Whom do men say thatI, the Son of man, am?" and again, "Whom say *ye* that I am?" To others he said, "What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is he?" Peter answered, "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." This was a good answer; and he greatly commended it, saying, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjonah; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." His knowledge of the person of Christ was supernatural; and our Lord further, to show the importance of it, adds, "Thou art *Peter*, (which signifies a *rock*); and having mentioned his name, takes occasion to speak of this confession he made, this article of faith, as the rock, or foun-

dation, on which the whole of the New Testament church shall be built. Indeed, this is the pillar and ground of the truth; and, without doubt, the great mystery of godliness, that Jesus Christ is GOD *manifest in the flesh*;—the WORD *made flesh*, who dwelt among us."

The *character*, *office*, or *work* of Christ, is of equal importance. St. Paul's resolution was, "to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and *him crucified*." Christ *as crucified*; as a sacrifice and atonement, was his darling topic. Though it was a stumbling-block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks, he knew it to be "the power of God to salvation;" and, indeed, the names he mentions in the text include much the same: *Christ Jesus my Lord*. The word *Christ* signifies *Anointed*. Priests, and others, used to be anointed with oil, which denoted their fitness for the office, and their appointment to it: so Christ was anointed by the Father, filled with the Holy Spirit, and set apart by divine authority, to be the Prophet, Priest, and King of the church. The name *Jesus* signifies a *Saviour*; it was given him "because he should save his people from their sins." And the apostle adds, *my Lord*; he acknowledges him to be the sovereign Ruler of his people, Head over all things; and calls him *his*, because he was his sworn servant.

The knowledge of Christ includes an acquaintance with his whole character, as drawn out in the New Testament. Here we see his innocence, his benevolence, his zeal, and especially his regard to poor sinners: how readily he listened to the cry of misery! how graciously he relieved the sick, the poor, and the guilty, when they applied to him! In a word, we see his glory, "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

But the knowledge of Christ also includes *faith in* him; according to that scripture, Isa. liii. 11, *By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many*. This cannot mean the knowledge that is in Christ,

but the knowledge of Christ that is in his people; and so stands for faith, which alone justifies a sinner in the sight of God. The true knowledge of Christ is always accompanied with faith in him; for "they that know his name will put their trust in him."

This then is that knowledge which St. Paul attained, and which he prized so highly, that he said, "I count all things but loss on account of it." Surely it must be most excellent in itself and in its effects, to be preferred above all things. If we saw a man willingly parting with all his property; selling his furniture, his house, his land, for the sake of buying one single article, we must conclude, if we had a good opinion of his prudence, that the article was of extraordinary value. And this is no more than the Christian is expected to do, according to our Lord's parable, Matt. xiii. 45:—"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant, seeking goodly pearls; who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it." Such a merchant was our apostle.—May divine grace make us such also! That we may see the wisdom of his conduct, let us now proceed to consider,

II. *The excellency* of this knowledge of Christ.

1. It is the most *necessary* kind of knowledge. Of many things we must be ignorant, because we cannot attain the knowledge of them; and of many things we may safely be ignorant; but the knowledge of Christ is necessary to salvation. "That the soul be without knowledge, is not good." Prov. xix. 2. There can be no *faith* in Jesus without it; and without faith no salvation. There can be no *love* to Jesus without it; and if no love, no salvation. Indeed, we may see how necessary it is, by the pains which Satan takes to prevent the attainment of it; for he, as the god of this world, hath blinded the eyes of men, lest they should get this knowledge by the gospel. On the other hand,

we learn its necessity from Christ's zeal to extend the word of salvation; for God our Saviour "will have all men (that is, *all sorts* of men) to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth." 1 Tim. ii. 4. Observe, They must have the knowledge of the truth, in order to their being saved.

2. It is the most *heavenly* kind of knowledge.—Every good gift comes down from God; but this especially. He who first created light in the world, "shines into the heart of man." It is the Holy Spirit who takes the things of Christ, and shows them unto us. It is written in the prophets, and daily fulfilled in the church, "All thy children shall be taught of God." The Spirit of God is the great Teacher; but he teaches by the word. "To expect that the Spirit will teach you without the word, is rank enthusiasm,—as great madness as to hope to see without eyes; and to expect that the word will teach you without the Spirit, is as great an absurdity as to pretend to see without light." God has joined the word and the Spirit together; and "let no man put them asunder." We read of having "the eyes of our understanding enlightened;" (Eph. i. 18.) and we read also of "Christ's opening the understanding of his disciples, that they might understand the Scriptures." It therefore becomes every one, who wishes for this heavenly knowledge, to pray with David, "O Lord, open mine eyes, that I may see wondrous things out of thy law!"

3. It is the most *useful* kind of knowledge. Every kind of knowledge is useful in its place; for it is to the mind what light is to the eyes; but this knowledge exceeds all other in its blessed effects. What was it that made so vast an alteration in the heathen world, so that from beasts and devils they became holy saints and children of God? It was the Gospel which opened "their eyes, and turned them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." Hereby thousands and thousands escape the pollutions of the world. In this consists much of

our regeneration; for the new man is "renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him." Col. iii. 10. And this renewing work is carried on by the same means; "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are transformed into the same image from glory to glory." As the face of Moses got a heavenly lustre by converse with God, so by the clear view of Christ's glory, in the looking-glass of the Gospel, we ourselves obtain something of his own amiable and holy likeness. O the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, which makes us like Christ! and, depend upon it, the more you know him, the more you will be like him.

This knowledge will humble the soul. Other knowledge puffeth up. The rays of the sun, which show its own glory, discover the uncleanness of a room into which they shine; so this excellent knowledge at once makes manifest the glory of Christ, and the deformity of the sinner. *Isaiah*, upon beholding Christ, the Lord of Hosts, cries out, "Woe is me! I am unclean." *Job* also exclaims, "Behold, I am vile!" and John fell at his glorious Saviour's feet, as one dead.

We observed before, that this knowledge is connected with *faith:* "they that know thy name will put their trust in thee." It would be arrant folly to trust a stranger with our all; but the knowledge of Christ encourages the soul to confide in him. *In whom ye trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth*, saith St. Paul to the Ephesians. None can trust him till they know him; and whoever knows him aright, will trust him. Well may we trust him, when we consider his almighty power, his infinite love, his divine righteousness, and his perfect faithfulness. In the view of these, Paul, in the prospect of death, could say, "I know whom I have believed; and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him, against that day." If we had a thousand souls, we might safely trust Jesus with them all.

4. This knowledge is, of all others, the most *pleasant.* Knowledge, in general, is grateful to the mind: and yet some kinds of knowledge are painful. Solomon says, "In much wisdom is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow." Eccl. i. 18. There must be a great deal of pains to get it, and a great deal of care to keep it: the more we know, the more we see remains to be known; and the more we perceive of the folly, madness, and misery of men. But there are no such inconveniences attending this knowledge; it is more easily attained; and he that increaseth it, increaseth his joy at the same time. "I rejoice at thy word," saith the Psalmist, "as he that findeth great spoil." "The law of thy mouth is to me better than gold or silver." "Thy word was found of me, and I did eat it: and it was the joy and rejoicing of my heart." What support does the afflicted Christian find in the Gospel of Christ!—he may say, "Thy statutes have been my song in the days of my pilgrimage." Hear Paul and Silas singing aloud at midnight in the jail of Philippi; it was the knowledge of Christ that made them sing; and thousands of dying believers have rejoiced in Christ amidst the pains of dissolving nature, and even in the flames of martyrdom! How excellent then is the knowledge of Christ!

APPLICATION.

Is the knowledge of Christ so excellent, then, *Do we possess it?* St. Paul said to the Corinthians, "Some of you have not the knowledge of God: I speak it to your shame; and a shame indeed it is, for those who have the means of knowledge to remain destitute of it. And it is more than a shame: it is a sin, and a sin of the most fatal kind; it keeps us from the exercise of repentance, faith, love, and obedience: yea, our Lord makes it the grand cause of final ruin: "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men have

loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil."

O think of this, while opportunity remains to obtain the knowledge of Christ. Seek it in the means of his appointment. "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God." Seek it earnestly, according to the divine direction, Prov. iii. 3, 4. "If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasure, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God; for the Lord giveth wisdom; he layeth up *sound wisdom* for the righteous."

And O, what cause have they for thankfulness who have obtained this "sound wisdom!" this most excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ! You cannot have a greater cause for joy. Christ himself gives you joy of it. "Blessed are your eyes, for they see." On a like occasion "Jesus rejoiced, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." You have greater cause for joy and praise than if you had got the knowledge of all languages, arts, and sciences; these might make you famous among men; but their advantage would be dropped in the grave. A very learned man once said on his dying bed, "I have spent my life in laborious triflings." He only is truly wise who is "wise to salvation." In this excellent knowledge you are allowed to glory; for "thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me," &c. O be thankful to Him who hath called you out of darkness into this marvellous light.

But while you are thankful for it, do not be proud of it. The wisest know but little of what is to be known. "Follow on to know the Lord." "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ." Read the word, and meditate on it day and night: pray over it, and pray for the Spirit to lead you into all truth. And while you praise him with your lips, remember also to praise him with your lives. Let it not be said, "What do you more than others?" But prove the superior excellency of your knowledge by the superior excellency of your conduct; "for ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord; *walk as children of light*, proving what is acceptable unto the Lord." Believers are appointed to be the lights in the world, and much of their duty is comprehended in one word—SHINE! "*Let your light*, says our Saviour, *shine*, and shine *before men* too; that is not forbidden; yea, it is commanded; but it is thus commanded, *Let your light so shine before men, that they, seeing your* GOOD WORKS (yourselves as little as may be—your works more than yourselves, as the sun giving us light, will scarcely suffer us to look upon itself) *may glorify*—Whom? You? No; but *your Father who is in Heaven.* Let your light shine; it is given for that purpose; but let it always shine to the glory of *the Father of lights.* Thus may you be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God, until you see him, no more "through a glass darkly, but face to face;" until you know, even as also you are known.

Now, unto God, the Father of lights,—to Jesus Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, and to the holy Spirit of truth, be all glory, by every enlightened mind in heaven and earth, for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON XLI.

LUKE XI. 21, 22.

When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace; but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.

THE miracles which our Lord performed were so obvious, that it was impossible for his greatest enemies to deny them; but such was the malice of their hearts, that they said he performed them by the power of the devil. Our Saviour, in answer to this, shows how unreasonable and absurd it is to suppose that Satan should cast out himself, or any way oppose his own kingdom: "for every kingdom divided against itself is brought into desolation; and a house divided against itself falleth." But in the text he shows how he had performed the miracle of casting out Satan, namely, by his superior power. He compares Satan to a strong man, armed with weapons to defend his house; and he compares himself to one that is stronger than the strong man. He allows that the devil is strong; but asserts that he is much stronger, and therefore able to cast him out. By this similitude our Lord vindicates his miracles, and proves he did not act in concert with Satan. But the words are also fairly applicable to Christ's continual victories over the devil in the hearts of men, by that power which still goes along with the preaching of the Gospel. They describe two things:—

I. The sad condition of an unconverted sinner; and

II. The wonderful power of divine grace in his conversion.

I. Here is the sad condition of an unconverted sinner; his heart is the habitation of Satan; the faculties of his mind, and the members of his body, are Satan's *goods;* they are employed by him in the service of sin; and while this is the case, there is peace—a false and dangerous security—until Christ, by his Gospel, disturbs it, and by his grace delivers the prey from the hands of the mighty.

(1.) The human heart is a *palace*, a noble building; at first erected for the habitation of the great and glorious God, who made man "in his own image, after his own likeness," "in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness." "But the holy God has withdrawn himself, and left his temple desolate. The stately ruins are visible to every eye, and bear in their front this doleful inscription,—HERE GOD ONCE DWELT. The comely order of this house is turned into confusion; the beauties of holiness into noisome impurities; the house of prayer into a den of thieves; the noble powers of the soul, designed for divine contemplation and delight, are alienated to the service of base idols and despicable lusts. The whole soul is like the ruined palace of some prince, in which you see *here* the fragments of a lofty pillar, *there* the shattered remains of a curious statue, and all lying neglected and useless among heaps of dirt. The faded glory, the darkness, the impurity, of this palace, plainly show *the great Inhabitant is gone!*" But,

(2.) The heart is now become the palace of Satan. Great is the power of the devil in this world, and over the minds of wicked men. This is an unwelcome truth; but it must be told. Our Saviour calls him (John xiv. 30.) *the prince of this world.*—He who rules in this kingdom of darkness, and who is also called (2 Cor. iv. 4.) *the god of this world*, be-

cause of the great interest he has in the world, and the homage that is paid him by the multitudes in the world, and the great sway that, by divine permission he beareth in the hearts of his subjects. The worship of the heathen is the worship of the devil. Those who worship Jupiter, Bacchus, Venus, or any other idol, do really worship the devil; and the foolish, filthy, and bloody rites and ceremonies of their worship are very fit for such devilish gods. But it is not only among Pagans that he reigns. St. Paul assures us, Eph. ii. 2, that unconverted men "walk according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air—*the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience*;—those who are disobedient to God are obedient to Satan: he works powerfully in them; they follow his suggestions; they comply with his temptations; they are subject to his commandments; and are "led captive by him at his will." This is a very awful state! People may be in it without knowing it. But all are in it *by nature*: all are *yet* in it who "walk after the flesh, fulfilling the lusts of the flesh and of the mind."

The dwelling of Satan in a sinner is further insisted on in this chapter, verse 24, &c. "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places seeking rest and finding none; he saith, *I will return to my house.*"—There may be a partial and temporary reformation in a sinner: but without a real change the devil will resume his power; "and the last state of that man is worse than the first."

The heart of man is either God's house or Satan's. If God does not rule there by his Spirit, Satan does; and it may easily be known who rules. St. John plainly decides this matter, 1 Epis. iii. 7: "Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil. In this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil." Our Lord

spake the same language to the wicked Jews. They boasted that they were Abraham's children, and the people of God; but he faithfully told them, "Ye are of your father the devil; and the lusts of your father ye will do." "Know ye not," saith the apostle Paul, Rom. vi. 16, "that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, *his* servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of *sin* unto death, or of *obedience* unto righteousness?" Sin is the devil's work, and death is the wages of sin. One person is under the power of drunkenness; another of uncleanness; another curses and swears; another lies; another steals. All these are Satan's drudges and slaves. Their slavery is the most abject in the world, and is worse than any other; for in other cases the poor slave longs for freedom, and gladly escapes if he can; but here the wretched sinner hugs his yoke, fancies music in his chains, and scorns the proposal of liberty. All this is owing to the power and craft of the devil, who

(3.) Endeavours by all means to keep possession —"the strong man armed *keepeth* the house;" and this he does by hiding from his vassals the fatal consequences of sin—by hindering any intercourse with the right owner—and by filling the heart with prejudice against him.

He keeps possession of the sinner's heart by hiding from him the evil and wages of sin. He is called *a ruler of darkness*, he reigns *in* darkness, and *by* darkness. Sinners little think where he is leading them. "Surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird." Prov. i. 17. The silly birds are wiser than sinners. Sinners are told of their danger, but to no purpose. Satan hath shut their eyes, and they are determined to keep them shut; "they love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil:" and how justly may a holy God doom that soul to everlasting darkness, who wilfully rejects the light of life!

Satan does all he can to prevent any intercourse

between the sinner and the blessed God who is the original and rightful owner of the heart. Such is the love of God to his rebellious creatures that he has sent his Son into the world to make reconciliation; and he has also sent his servants to publish the Gospel, or the ministry of reconciliation, "beseeching sinners, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God." But Satan dreads the effect of the Gospel, and therefore tries to hinder it. St. Paul says, "Satan hath blinded the mind of unbelievers, lest the light of the glorious Gospel should shine into them." He would keep the light of the Gospel out of the world if he could; and he tries hard for it in some places, by his persecuting agents; but as he cannot do this, he will keep it out of men's hearts if possible. He loves to keep men in ignorance and error. He persuades some to break the Sabbath, and to forsake the house of God, and to neglect the Bible; and he keeps others in a state of wretched formality; they worship God with their bodies, but their hearts are far from him.

He fills the hearts of many with prejudices against Christ and the Gospel. Those who preach it and receive it, generally go under some name of reproach, and are so misrepresented by ignorant, interested, and carnal persons, that they are afraid to hear and judge for themselves. Where open persecution is not permitted, this is one of Satan's principal means of keeping the possession of the sinner's heart. But this snare would be broken if men would remember that it has always been the lot of good men to be despised;—that Christ himself was treated in the same manner—that he tells all his followers to expect reproach; and calls upon them to rejoice and be exceeding glad on that account. Thus you see that,

(4.) Satan is but too well qualified to maintain his ground: he is compared to a *strong man*,—and to a strong man *armed*. Devils are fallen angels, strong in their natural powers; vastly superior to

men; and they have been long practised in the arts of destruction; they are like enemies flushed with victory, having succeeded in millions of instances, and were therefore not afraid to attack the innocent Jesus himself. Satan is *armed;* armed with astonishing cunning; he is "the old serpent," that deceived the whole world; armed with inveterate malice against God and against man: as a hungry and ravenous lion, he goeth about seeking whom he may devour.

We read in 2 Cor. x. 4, of Satan's *strong holds*—fortified places. Ignorance, prejudice, beloved lusts, evil habits, the way of the world, &c. are Satan's strong holds in the hearts of some. Vain imaginations, carnal reasonings, and proud conceits of self-righteousness, exalt themselves in others against the knowledge of God; and by these means the devil keeps men from faith in Christ, and retains the possession of their hearts as his own property.

(5.) While the strong man, thus armed, keepeth his palace, *his goods are in peace.* There is indeed "no (true) peace to the wicked:" God hath not spoken peace; but sinners speak peace to themselves; and Satan, by wicked and carnal ministers, who are some of his best agents, speaks peace also. Carnal persons have generally a good opinion of themselves and of their state; they think they have good hearts; are not so bad as others, and have no occasion to be uneasy. Just like St. Paul before his conversion.—*I was alive,* saith he *without the law once.* He thought if any man would go to heaven he should. He trusted in his birth and education; his good church, and his good life: Satan, the strong man armed, had then full possession of his heart, and therefore all was quiet; "but when the *commandment came;*" when the holy, fiery, spiritual, law, Christ's pioneer, came and showed him he was a sinner, a great sinner, the chief of sinners,—then farewell this old peace, this false peace, this fatal

peace; then he saw *what* he was, and *where* he was; and was glad to get peace from another quarter, even from the blood of Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

If a person was never uneasy about his sins, it is no good sign. It may be feared that Satan keeps his heart; for wherever the Gospel comes, though it be the Gospel of peace, it creates disturbance. It often occasions great agitation in a parish, in a family, and in the heart; and be not offended, brethren, if it do so among you. Jesus Christ has told us it will do so (Luke xii. 52.) "Suppose ye that I am come to give *peace* on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather *division*,"—"a *sword*,"—"*fire*." Ver. 29. The Gospel certainly tends to promote peace with God and man; but through the carnal enmity of the natural man, it becomes an occasion of great discord. Wherever the Gospel was first preached by the apostles, it excited disturbance and persecution; and, to this day, where the true Gospel is newly preached, it makes "no small stir," and people are ready to say, as of old, "The men who have turned the world upside down are come hither also." Satan will not quietly part with his prey; and ungodly men, who know not the nature and need of the Gospel, will oppose it.

The Gospel is designed to bring the heart to rest and peace in Jesus; but, as the soul must change masters, this revolution cannot be brought about without division. There must be a separation of the heart from the creature, in order to its union with God; for peace with the world and peace with him are inconsistent.

Having thus shown you the first thing in the text, namely, The sad condition of an unconverted sinner, let us proceed to display,

II. The wonderful power of divine grace in his conversion—*when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoil.*

Observe here, the greatness of the Conqueror,

Jesus Christ; he alone is stronger than Satan. Strong as the devil is, he is but a creature, and his power is finite: Jesus Christ is the Creator, and his power is infinite. He made the worlds. This earthly ball, the glittering stars, the silver moon, and the glorious sun, are all the work of his hands; and by his power all nature stands; "in him all things consist;" "for of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, and to him be glory for ever. Amen." This glorious and gracious God "was manifested in the flesh; he took our feeble nature and became a man, that he might "destroy the works of the devil," and rescue his people from Satan's destructive hands.

See him in the wilderness encountering this hellish foe; he was tempted in all points like ourselves; but he vanquished the enemy, and he fled from him. See him displaying his superior power in casting out devils from the bodies of many miserable people. They could never resist his command. By a single word he relieved multitudes who had long been oppressed by Satan, and whose bodies as well as souls had been his habitation. He gave a portion of the same power to his disciples, who, returning from their mission, joyfully cried, "Even the devils are subject unto us through thy name!" "I beheld," said he, "Satan fall as lightening from heaven." Thus was "the prince of this world judged." The conquest was completed when he hung on the cross; and the triumph was celebrated when he rose to the skies—"he spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly;" "he led captivity captive, and received gifts for men."

The power of Christ over Satan was displayed in every country where the Gospel was preached. The heathens became ashamed of their idols; and the altars of their gods were deserted. Those oracles in which, perhaps, Satan had been suffered to speak, were struck dumb? the most abandoned of mankind were reformed and renewed, and the world was

astonished at the triumphs of the cross; for it was not by the force of human laws, it was not by the edge of the sword, nor was it by the power of eloquence, that the Gospel prevailed; no, "the weapons of this warfare were not carnal;" and however mean they seemed in the eyes of men, they were "mighty, through God, to pull down the strong holds of the devil." Every man, who knew its nature and felt its effects, would say with the apostles, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God to salvation, to every one that believeth;" "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ, by which the world is crucified to me, and I to the world."

As the strong man was armed, Jesus Christ is also armed. So speaks the Psalmist:—"Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty; and in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth, meekness, and righteousness; and let thy right hand teach thee terrible things; thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies, whereby the people fall under thee." Ps. xlv. 3-5. Here Christ is described as a warrior armed for the field. The sword is "the word of Christ," or the Gospel; with this weapon he prevailed, and made his "glory and majesty" known throughout the world, subduing idolatry and iniquity to the faith and temper of the Gospel, and thus rescuing his elect from the power of the devil.

In this conquest, Christ "takes away the armour," on which so much dependance was placed. By the teaching of the Holy Spirit, he takes away the scales of ignorance which covered the eyes; the soul discovers its danger and ruin. He renews the will, for his people are "made willing in the day of his power;" they are glad to quit the service of their old master, and willingly yield themselves unto the Lord." Thus is that prophecy of Isaiah ful-

filled:—"I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong." (Chap. liii. 12.) Having conquered Satan, he takes possession. Much of the glory of Christ consists in vast multitudes of redeemed souls becoming his faithful subjects and humble followers. Subdued by his grace, they give up themselves to him, to be saved, taught and governed: thus "he sees the travail of his soul," the fruit of his sufferings; and thus "the pleasure of the Lord prospers in his hands."

"He divided the spoil." As a conqueror takes possession of the enemy's property, so Christ, having subdued the sinner, now possesses what was before at the disposal of Satan. It is a sad truth, that whatever gifts a natural man has, they are applied for the purposes of sin; his wealth, his wisdom, his time, his influence, and all that he hath. How reasonable is it then, that the saved sinner, constrained by the mercies of God, should present his body a living sacrifice to the Lord, holy and acceptable; it is indeed his reasonable service and the poet's sweet language will be cordially adopted.

"Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far to small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

APPLICATION.

Whose habitation are we? Christ's, or the devil's? One or the other rules in our hearts. Every man is under the influence of the good Spirit of God, or the evil spirit of the devil. "Know ye not that ye are the temples of the Holy Ghost?" said the apostle to the first Christians. So we may say to wicked men, Know ye not that ye are the temples of Satan, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience? Does *sin* reign in you, or *Christ?* What is your leisure time devoted to?

What are your affections set upon? Is it upon vanity, pleasure, the lusts of the flesh? While Christ, and his great salvation are neglected, the soul forgotten, sin indulged, prayer omitted, religion despised!—O, sirs, your case is dreadful! You may, perhaps, laugh at all this; you may even say there is no such being as the devil; that the Scriptures speak in a figurative way and use strong eastern figures; but you may as well deny that you have a rational spirit within you, as deny the existence of good and evil spirits without you. Our Lord teaches us daily to pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil;" or as it might be rendered,—*the evil one.* O that you might put up that prayer from your heart! O that you had a wish to be delivered from his power! for if you should live and die under it, you must hear that awful sentence from the mouth of Christ, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for *the devil and his angels!*" Horrible company! frightful association! Yet, how just! Sinners hearkened to his temptations, and they must partake in his torments. His works they would do, his wages they must receive. In this life they joined with the devils against God and holiness; in the other, they must be shut up with them for ever. O that men would consider this in time; renounce the devil and his works, and open the door of their hearts to the Lord! Why should men choose that company in this world which they abhor in the next? Those who hate the company of the religious now, will not be troubled with it hereafter; but as ungodly company is their delight now, they will have a miserable eternity to pass with it; and let those who foolishly invocate the devil to take them, soberly consider that the company so often invited will be terrible when it comes.

But, O believer in Jesus! hail, thou art happily delivered. Adore and love the great deliverer. Had not he interposed, had he not conquered Satan for

thee on the cross, and in thee by his Spirit, thou hadst still been his wretched vassal. When Jesus had cast the devil out of a man who had been miserably treated by him, he was so transported with love and gratitude, that he besought him "that he might be with him;" (Luke viii. 38.) he longed to enjoy his company, as Mary Magdalene and others whom he had healed did; but our Lord saw fit to deny him this request, and ordered him "to return to his own house, and show what great things God had done for him." Go, Christian, and do likewise. Like him, "publish throughout the whole city how great things Jesus has done for thee."

"The castle of the human heart,
Strong in its native sin,
Is guarded well on every part
By him who dwells within.

"Thus Satan for a season reigns,
And keeps his goods in peace;
The soul is pleas'd to wear his chains,
Nor wishes a release.

"But Jesus stronger far than he,
In his appointed hour,
Appears to set his people free
From the usurper's power.

"The rebel soul that once withstood
The Saviour's kindest call,
Rejoices now by grace subdued,
To serve him with her all."

OLNEY HYMNS.

SERMON XLII.

COLOSSIANS III. 2.

But Christ is All.

THE necessity of having *some* religion is generally admitted, even by the most ignorant and profane. All agree that we ought to be religious; but what true religion consists in, is very much disputed. Every man forms a system for himself, and then flatters himself, it must be right. But as there are various schemes, which contradict each other, we are sure they cannot all be right. How then shall we judge whether they be right or wrong! I answer, The Gospel is our only rule. Bring every thing called Religion to this touchstone. Bring it to this text, *Christ is all;* that is, in true Christian religion, Christ is all. He is the sum and substance of it; the beginning and the end of it.

St. Paul is here speaking of conduct agreeable to the Christian profession; he is recommending to the Colossians the mortification of all corrupt affections; to "put off the old man of sin," and to "put on the new man" of grace; for a true Christian is "a new creature;" and in this state of renovation, or, under the present Gospel dispensation, he says, "There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but *Christ is all, and in all;*" that is, under the Gospel, God hath no partial respect to persons on account of their country, their religious forms, customs, or situations in life: Christ has taken away all partition-walls; and men of all sorts stand

on the same level before God, both as to duty and privilege; and for this reason Christ is the *all* of a Christian, let him be who he may, Jew or Gentile, rich or poor, master, or servant,—his whole salvation, hope, and happiness, from first to last. The words then teach us this grand truth—

In the religion of the Gospel, Christ is all.

This is the general language of Scripture:—Whatever we want in religion, we must have it from Jesus. So St. Paul speaks, 1 Cor. i. 30, "Christ is made unto us, *wisdom*, *righteousness*, *sanctification*, *and redemption*". We are ignorant and foolish in the things of God; Christ, by his Word and Spirit, is made *wisdom* to us. We are guilty sinners, liable to God's wrath; he is made *righteousness* to us; he is our great atonement and sacrifice. We are depraved and corrupt; he is made *sanctification* to us; he is the source of all grace; and out of his fulness we receive grace for grace. We must die and see corruption; but if united to him, he shall raise us up again, and deliver us from the power of the grave, and so be made *redemption* to us. Thus is he our *all*, that "no flesh should glory in his presence," but that, as "Christ is all," Christ may have all the glory.

Whatever we want in religion we have in Christ. To be *accepted* of God, to be *sanctified* in heart and life, and to be made *happy* here and hereafter, are the great things we seek in religion. In Jesus we have them all.

1. Jesus Christ is *all* in our *Justification*.

We are sinners. We have broken the holy law of God; and by so doing we have exposed ourselves to the dreadful curse of the law, and to the terrible wrath of an offended God. However easy and secure ignorant sinners may be, it is a certain truth that sin renders us liable to wrath. Fornication and uncleanness, drunkenness and covetousness, shut men out of the kingdom of God. "Let no man

deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." Ephes. v. 3. 6. And O, who can tell the power of his anger! "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Now, when the blessed God intends mercy for a sinner, he opens his eyes to behold his true condition. He perceives that he has to do with a most holy God, who hates sin, and will certainly punish it. He sees plainly that he is a sinner, a great sinner, a rebel against God. He is alarmed, and justly too. His fears are well-grounded; and in the manner of persons terrified at the approach of danger, he cries out, "What shall I do to be saved? Is salvation possible? How may I obtain it? I would fly from the wrath to come; but whither must I fly?"

To a person in this state the Gospel is welcome indeed! It affords glad tidings of great joy. It sets before the distressed sinner just exactly what he wants: a SAVIOUR, mighty and ready to save;—to "save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him."

Some, indeed, who are under concern of soul, do not at first see that Christ must be all in their coming to God. Sensible of sin, and afraid of hell, "they go about for a time to establish their own righteousness." "I have been a wicked sinner, saith one, but I will reform my life; and if I do my best, will not that suffice? I will be sorry for what is past, and amend in future. I will be religious, devout, and charitable; will not God then accept me?"

I answer by another question, Is this making Christ *all?* No; it is making him *nothing.* Christ alone is a sinner's righteousness. See what the Scriptures say on this head.

Is the wrath of God due to sin? *Christ hath delivered us from the wrath to come.* 1 Thess. i. 10. Does the holy law denounce a *curse* against every transgressor? *Christ hath redeemed us from the*

curse of the law, being made a curse for us. Gal. iii. 13. Can there be no remission of sin without shedding of blood? *Christ hath shed his blood for the remission of sins.* Matt. xxvi. 28. Does the law require of us a perfect righteousness? *Christ was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.* 2 Cor. v. 21. Are we far from God? *He died, the just for the unjust, to bring us unto God.* 1 Pet. iii. 18. Are we, as sinners abominable to God, and justly rejected? If believers in Christ, *we are accepted in the beloved.* Eph. i. 6. Are we every way imperfect in ourselves? *We are complete in him.* Colos. ii. 10. Are we pursued by the law? *We have fled for refuge to lay hold on* (Christ) *the hope set before us in the Gospel.* Heb. vi. 16. Are we filthy by reason of sin? *The blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin.* 1 John i. 7.

These scriptures, and many more which might be quoted, show that, in the grand affair of a sinner's justification, or acceptance with God, *Christ is all.* Nothing more is needed; and every thing else must be rejected. No works or righteousness of our own have any thing to do in this matter. Good works are the proper fruits of faith, and necessary in their place; but in a sinner's pardon and acceptance with God, let Christ alone be exalted; for *by grace are we saved through faith: not of works, lest any man should boast.* Eph. ii. 8, 9.

2. Jesus Christ is *all* in our *Sanctification.*

It is admitted, on all hands, that men should be good and holy. Morality, at least, is thought necessary; but the scriptures go further, and require, not only morality of conduct, but holiness of heart; and declare that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," or go to heaven. But the great matter is, how shall this holiness be obtained? Many think that the free will and natural powers of man, properly excited by fear of punishment and hope of reward, will produce it. But this is a great mistake.

"Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." In this business then of sanctification, as well as in that of justification, we shall prove that Christ is all.

"Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit on the souls of believers, purifying their nature from the pollution of sin; renewing them in the image of God; and enabling them, from a principle of grace, to yield obedience to him; and all this done by virtue of the life and death of Jesus Christ, and the union of believers to him."

Many devout persons take pains to reform and purify their hearts and lives, without sufficiently looking to Christ. They think that they must be justified by the righteousness of Christ, that they must be sanctified by a holiness wrought out by themselves, which, as one says, is "like sqeezing oil out of a flint." They are not aware that sanctification is by receiving a new nature from above, and by union to Christ himself. Christ dwells in the hearts of believers; they are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. "He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit." It is therefore by virtue derived from him that we become holy. "Abide in me (saith Jesus) and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, —no more can ye, except ye abide in me; for without me ye can do nothing." John xv. 5. Thus "Christ is made unto us sanctification." He procured it for us; it is one of the fruits of his death; what he designed in dying for us; he gave himself for us, that he might purify us unto himself, a people zealous of good works. Titus ii. 14. It is one of "the spiritual blessings with which we are blessed in him;" a special part of his salvation. All the springs of our sanctification are in him; and they are communicated to us by the constant agency of the Spirit of Christ, who dwells in all believers.

The example of Christ is also the grand rule of our sanctification. "We are predestinated to be con-

formed to his image," that, "as he was, so we may be in this world." He is proposed to us in the Gospel, in the purity of his nature, in the glory of his graces, and in the usefulness of his conversation, as the holy example, which we should constantly imitate. It was one design of his coming into our world, that we might have before our eyes, in our own nature, a perfect model of love to God and man; of holiness, innocence, meekness, patience, devotion, and zeal. Nor is he a Christian, except merely in name, who does not daily strive to follow him who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." Happy would it be for Christians, if they laboured to be more like Christ! and by constantly meditating on the beauty of holiness in him, they would be "changed into the same image from glory to glory."

The word of Christ is the great instrument of our sanctification. By the word of Christ we are begotten again; and by the same word we are nourished unto eternal life. When our Saviour prayed for the sanctification of his disciples, he mentioned the means or instrument thereof: "Sanctify them through *thy truth*; thy word is truth." It is the truth of the Gospel, the knowledge of Christ as our Redeemer and Saviour, that the Lord blesses for our purification. We must indeed study the law, as contained in the Ten Commandments, not in order by our obedience to it to obtain heaven, but to learn its spirituality and purity, to be made sensible of our inability to obey it perfectly, and then to see Christ as the fulfiller of the law, that we may live by faith in his righteousness. Confidence in Jesus, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, and hope of glory, will wonderfully contribute to our growth in holiness. And thus it appears that Jesus Christ is *all*, in the matter of our sanctification.

3. Christ is *all*, in respect of *true happiness*, both here and hereafter.

That man is a miserable creature, few will deny;

and that sin alone has made him such, none will deny who know the Scriptures. It is, therefore, only the removal of what made him miserable, that can ever make him happy again; and none can do this but Jesus Christ. Sin has blinded the eyes of men in their pursuit of good. They seek the living among the dead; like Satan himself, "they wander about, seeking rest and finding none." On the contrary, sin procures misery. The pleasures of sin are momentary, but followed by long and tedious hours of painful reflection and remorse. Envy and wrath, and anger, and malice, frequently raise a storm in the sinner's bosom; and many a gay worldling feels, at times, a foreboding and dismal prelude of that "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish," which will be the sinner's portion in hell.

But O the matchless mercy of God our Saviour! "He remembered us in our low estate." He looked down from heaven with an eye of compassion. He pitied our miserable condition, and determined upon our relief. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, became poor, that we through his poverty might become rich."

The religion of the Gospel is calculated to make man happy. "The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," Rom. xiv. 17; that is, in the righteousness of faith, and true holiness in heart and life; in solid peace of conscience, through the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, and a peaceable temper towards others, under a sense of God's being at peace with us; and in holy, heavenly joy and consolation, in communion with God, and lively expectation of eternal glory.

Christ is the author of true peace. It does not arise from a Christian's good opinion of himself and his duties; not his good heart, or his good frame, or his good deeds; not from any thing done by him, or wrought in him but from what Christ has done and suffered; from the glory of his person, the love of his heart, the perfection of his righteousness, and

the fulness of his grace. The believer looks not at, depends not upon himself, but upon Jesus; and draws all his safety and happiness from him. His Conscience says, I will have nothing to do with any thing for salvation, but the righteousness of Jehovah Jesus, and his atonement on the tree. His Heart says, This is all my salvation and all my desire. Hope says, I have cast an anchor in Jesus, I cannot be disappointed. Fear says, I would not for the world offend my God and Father. Thus the whole man bows in subjection to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; the miserable sinner becomes a happy believer, and Christ is all in all.

Abundant is the provision made in the covenant of grace for the present happiness of the Christian in his way to heaven; and look at this which way you will, Christ is the sum and substance of it.—Many are the great and precious promises made to believers; and "all the promises are in him Yea, and in him Amen." The Christian's state is safe, because Christ is his Keeper, his sheep are in his hand and none shall ever pluck them thence.

And as much of the believer's comfort is conveyed to him through the channel of ordinances, let it be observed, that in them also Christ is all in all. Does he *pray?* he cannot live without it; but Christ is the life of his prayers. HE only is the way to the Father; the new and living way into the holiest of all, by which he has access with boldness and confidence, being encouraged to ask what he will, and expect what he asks. Does he offer *praise?* the chief matter of it is "Blessed be God, who hath blessed me with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus." He sees all temporal blessings flowing to him through Jesus, and is thankful for them; but his highest note of praise is "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift!" Does he *read* or *hear the word?*—he loves it, because it is the "word of Christ" and no preaching has any sweetness in it if Jesus be forgotten or slighted.

Look at the *sacraments*, and you will find them saying Christ is all. What is *baptism* but a declaration of our misery by sin, our need of Christ as a purifier, and a badge of our belonging to him? We are "baptized unto Christ," we are "buried and risen with Christ," we "put on Christ." The *Lord's Supper* was instituted to be a memorial of Christ; the bread is the communion of his body, and the cup the communion of his blood. This ordinance shows us that Christ is the food of our souls, sufficient to nourish them unto eternal life; and is intended to stir up and strengthen believers to receive and feed upon him in their hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

As Christ is the Christian's all through life, so is he, especially, his all in a *dying hour*. In that important season, creatures, however useful before, are no longer of any use. What can then support the soul just entering into eternity, but a precious Christ? It is *His* death that takes away the sting of death: It is the hope of being *with Him*, and being *like Him*, that reconciles the believer to the great change; together with his faithful promise, that "of all the Father hath given him, none shall be lost, and he will raise them up at the last day."—Through Christ alone it is that the dying Christian may, and often does triumph, saying, "O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?"

We go one step further, and add, that in heaven itself Jesus Christ is all in all. It is His glorious presence that brightens and cheers the heavenly world. "I have a desire to depart, and to be with Christ," said St. Paul. This was what he thought "far better" than all his spiritual enjoyments and useful engagements below. Yea, Christ himself expresses his most affectionate desires for the happiness of his people, by saying. "Father, I will, that they whom thou hast given me, be *with* me where I am, that they may behold my glory." It is

an infinite mercy to be *in Christ:* this is our security: it is an unspeakable favour to have *Christ with us;* this is our chief happiness on earth: but the blessing that completes and crowns the whole, is to be *with Christ* for ever and ever. There all the millions of the redeemed shall be of one heart and of one mind, and with one voice concur to sing that Jesus Christ is all in all.

APPLICATION.

1. From what has been said, it appears how erroneous, unscriptural, defective, and destructive, every system of religion must be, wherein Christ is not all. Look around you; such systems will readily be found, in which Christ is not all; in which he is little or nothing. The mere moral scheme, or the notion of men's being saved by their good works, deprives him of all his glory, and renders the expense of his precious blood a needless waste; "for if righteousness comes by the law, Christ is dead in vain." Gal. ii. 21. Beware of every doctrine that would lessen the honour of Jesus, and your regard to him. You cannot raise him too high, or exalt him too much, for he is all in all.

2. Let every one of us then examine his own religion by this rule. What is Christ to *me?* Do *I* prize and esteem him above all, as "the chief of ten thousands, and altogether lovely?" In the all-important concern of approaching to God, and seeking *acceptance* with him, what do *I,* a guilty, filthy, helpless sinner, look to and rest upon? Is it Jesus alone? Is he *my* all in coming to God? In the grand affair of *sanctification*—the love of God and the love of man; do *I* consider this as a part of the salvation that is in Christ, as prepared for me, and laid up in Jesus, to be received daily out of his fulness by faith? And as to *my happiness* in this world of misery, do I draw it out of the broken cisterns of perishing creatures, or from the unfailing

and boundless ocean of divine love? Do I daily endeavour to walk with God as *my* God, reconciled to *me* in Jesus; trusting in him for all needful blessings, to keep me safe, and render me happy; seeing all my affairs in his hands working together for good, and leading me forward, step by step, to his blessed presence, where there is fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore? Happy, thrice "happy is the man that is in such a case; yea, happy is the man whose God is the Lord!" Ps. cxliv. 15.

How rich is the believer! He who has Christ has *all*, for Christ is all. *All are yours*, says the apostle, *whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours.* 1 Cor. iii. 22. The *various gifts* of Christian ministers are yours; the government of the *world* is upon the shoulders of Christ, who is "Head over all things to the church: your *lives* are given you for a blessing, whether they be long or short, prosperous or afflicted; *death* itself, the king of terrors, is disarmed of its sting; and in whatever form it comes, it comes to be your eternal gain; all *present* things, spiritual or temporal, comfortable or painful, work together for your good; every occurrence yet before us in this world, is wisely adjusted by infinite love; and, to crown all, in the future world there is "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved for you, and ready to be revealed."

On the other hand, how poor, how miserably poor, is the carnal worldling, the careless sinner, the man who lives "without Christ in the world!" He has nothing, let him possess what he may. Could he call both the Indies his own, he is "poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked;" even now he feels an aching void; and death will soon convince him, that all is vanity and vexation of spirit. O that you may be wise in time! Behold, this glorious Saviour stands at the door of

your hearts, and sues for admission. O consider the matter well before it be too late. "Have you sins, or have you none? If you have, whither should you go but to the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world? Have you souls, or have you none? If you have, whither should you go but to the Saviour of souls? Is there a life to come, or is there not? If there is, whither should you go but to Him, who only hath the words of eternal life? Is there a wrath to come or is there not? If there is, whither should you go but to Him who only can deliver from the wrath to come? And will he not receive you? If he yielded himself into the hands of them that sought his life, will he hide himself from the hearts of them that seek his mercy? If he was willing to be taken by the hand of Violence, is he not much more willing to be taken by the hand of Faith? O come, come, come! I charge you come. I beseech you come. Come and he will give you life, Come, and he will give you rest. Come, and he will receive you. Come as thou art, come poor, come needy, come empty;" Christ is all, and has all, and will give thee all, to make thee happy now and for ever.

To Him, who is all in all, be all glory now and for ever. Amen.

SERMON XLIII.

JOHN vi. 67, 68.

Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.

THESE words were occasioned by a remarkable falling off among the followers of our Lord. Vast numbers of people attended his ministry—and no wonder. The sanctity of his character, the benevolence of his heart, the amazing miracles that he wrought, and especially his sweet, heavenly, powerful manner of preaching, could not but excite great multitudes to follow him. Thousands and thousands listened to him with pleasure; and yet the number of his genuine disciples was very small.

Having performed an amazing miracle, in feeding five thousand people with five loaves, the people were satisfied that he was the Messiah, and determined to make him a king. Our Lord withdrew, and crossed the sea; the people followed him; when he took occasion to deal very closely with them, and to point out the cause of their not coming to him for life. This gave them great offence; but it proved who were his true disciples, and that the rest were such only in pretence. The whole of his conference with them displays the faithfulness of Christ, and the fickleness of man.

The words of our text are very affecting:—Many of his nominal disciples have left him; he puts the

question to the twelve apostles, "Will *ye* also go away? Will you follow their example? or will you abide with me? Peter, in the name of the rest, dreading the thoughts of apostacy, answered, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life;" we can never expect so much happiness from another. And he answered well; for those who forsake Christ will never mend themselves, go where they will.

The words may be usefully applied to ourselves. Let us consider Jesus as putting the same question to us; and we may, with Peter's sincerity, make the same reply.

I. Let us consider the question, "Will ye also go away?"

This question was put to persons who had professed some regard for Christ; they had seen his miracles with admiration; they had heard his preaching with delight; and they had crossed the lake to meet him again. The same question, therefore, as put to *us*, supposes a professed regard for Christ, as set before us in the Gospel; for if we have not, in some sense, come to him, of course we cannot forsake him. But as the people of old followed him from false motives, and with wrong views, it may be proper for us to consider what it is that makes many among us profess to follow him; and it is plain that the little profession which some make, is the mere effect of custom. They are Christians because their parents were such, and because their neighbours are such. It is the religion of the country; and were these people in Turkey, they would be Mahometans. The influence of superiors, or friends, sometimes brings them to hear the gospel; and the love of novelty keeps them under it for a time. Some persons are much struck with the fervency of a minister of Christ, who speaks in earnest, and from the heart; while the seriousness, the fervour, and the singing of a lively congregation, make an additional impression.

Self-interest and worldly advantage make other men professors; as the people referred to in our text followed Christ for the loaves and fishes. A few others were alarmed by sickness and the fear of death, or affected at some public calamity.

But if a person's religion has no better foundation than these afford, we wonder not at his apostacy. Sooner or later such professors will go back, and follow Christ no more: and the world abounds with temptations, which will be fatal to those who have not "the root of the matter" in them. It may be profitable to point out some of these.

Persecution frightens some. Our Lord has bid us expect opposition in following him; for "they who will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution." We must "take up the cross" if we follow him; and those who sit not down to count the cost, will be offended when the trial comes. If relations and friends are angry and frown upon them; if superiors and employers withdraw their favours; if their neighbours ridicule and laugh at them, they begin to repent of becoming religious: they regard man more than God, and resolve to be religious only so far as may consist with their worldly ease and advantage. These are the people described by our Lord in the parable of the sower, Matt. xiii. 20. "He that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it. Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for awhile; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended."

Worldly pleasures, *worldly cares*, and *worldly connexions*, make others forsake Christ. The Christian's is a spiritual life; whoever is led by the Spirit, will not fulfil the lusts of the flesh, nor walk according to the flesh. "If we live after the flesh we perish; but if we, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live." If we are Christians indeed, the world will be crucified to us, and we to the world; and though we are *in* it, we shall not

be *of* it: but if the professor forgets this, and is drawn by degrees into self-indulgence; if he gets a taste of gaiety and public amusements; if he can visit the play-house, and sit down at the card-table, he will gradually lose the savour of the Gospel; and finding a manifest contradiction between the two masters he serves, he will soon quit one of them; he cannot follow Christ and the world too.

Excessive cares are almost as dangerous; they distract the mind, and make it unfit for religious duties: they steal away the heart from Christ. Anxiety about the world perplexes the mind; and they who "will be rich," and determine, at all events, to make a fortune, usually make such compliances with that view, as are inconsistent with their profession; they "fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." 1 Tim. vi. 9. Thus our Lord saith, "He also that received seed among the thorns, is he that heareth the word; and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful."

Worldly connexions ruin others. It is a precept of great importance, but too litle regarded, "Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers." Christians should marry "only in the Lord." How many "have made shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience," by neglecting this rule: and by presuming upon their ability both to keep their own ground and influence their partner also! When Lot was about to leave Sodom, the angels bid him give warning to all his relations of the destruction that was coming. Accordingly "he went to his sons-in-law, who married his daughters, and said, Up! get ye out of this place, for the Lord will destroy this city; but he seemed to them as one that mocked." Thus the two daughters, who had married carnal men, perished, while the two who were with him at home, escaped the fire with their father. Gen. xix.

Familiarity with worldly men has a bad influence on the mind. "They that feared the Lord, in old time, spoke often one to another." The primitive Christians were much together, and continued daily in social religion; and while they did so, they were edified and multiplied. But if professors needlessly associate with wicked and vain persons, they will soon resemble them, learn their manners, and go back from Christ.

Negligence in religious duties is another cause of apostacy. The means of grace are of divine appointment; they are wisely calculated to promote the life of God in their souls; and they have the promise of the Lord's blessing to make them effectual; they cannot therefore be slighted without injury. As the body must suffer if there be not proper attention to wholesome food, so the soul must be injured, if ordinances be omitted, or carelessly attended. Declensions in religion usually begin in the closet, then extend to social duties, at length to the duties of the Sabbath and the house of God. Be not *slothful* then, but "be diligent; followers of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises."

The falls and divisions of some professors have a very ill effect upon others. It is common for beginners in religion to entertain too high an opinion of serious characters, and to place too much confidence in them; and if any of those miscarry, they are hurt, and rashly conclude that there is no reality in religion; but they forget that there was a *Judas* among the twelve, and in every age there have been apostates; "nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure; the Lord knoweth them that are his." But "woe to the world," and to ignorant professors of this sort, because of offences; "for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh."

This chapter will furnish us with another common cause of apostacy. We shall find that it was *the*

doctrine of Christ which offended those "many disciples, who went back, and walked no more with him." Let us see what this offensive doctrine was.

The multitude had followed him because of the miraculous entertainment he gave them. This raised their hopes of his being a temporal king, and of their getting rich in his service. Our Lord, who knew their thoughts, directed them to seek, not the bread that perisheth, but that which endureth to eternal life; not meat for their bodies, but for their souls. He also declared *himself* to be that meat; that he came down from heaven; that he would give his flesh for the life of the world; and that except a man should eat his flesh, and drink his blood, he could have no life in him; but that whoever should partake of him, should never die, but have eternal life.

These high and mysterious declarations confounded and offended them; they murmured when he said he came down from heaven; for they knew Joseph his reputed father; and having no spiritual ideas of his discourse, they cried, "How can he give us his flesh to eat?" In short, they thought these "hard sayings," not to be understood or believed.

Our Lord still maintained the doctrine of his descent from heaven; and intimated, that, ere long, they would see him ascend thither. He told them, that *eating his flesh*, was not to be taken in the gross sense of the words, but was to be understood spiritually. He also showed them, that their cavils and murmurs arose from the ignorance, corruption, and unbelief of their hearts; and that they needed divine teaching to make them wise to salvation; and that no man could or would come to him, and believe upon him, without superior assistance. "No man can come unto me, except the Father, who sent me, draw him."

These were the sublime and mysterious, but great and glorious truths, which so offended the Jews, and occasioned such a falling off among the disciples.

And is it not just the same to this day? Do we not

still find that these doctrines give offence? The claim of Christ to a divine origin is opposed by some; the doctrine of his atonement is rejected by others; and the humbling doctrines of the necessity of divine influences, and of the sovereignty of God in bestowing them where he pleases, are held in abhorrence by many. Talk to men of morality, virtue, and good works, and they will hear you; but speak of grace, of the blood of Christ, of faith in his blood, of being taught of God, and drawn by the Spirit, and then they cry, Enthusiasm! Methodism! &c. But let us not be offended at this; it should confirm us in the belief of the truth; and while many go back and follow Christ no more, let us consider him as putting the solemn question to us. "Will ye also go away?"

The question is the language of *affection:* it speaks the kindness of his loving heart. Our gracious Lord has a real concern for his servants, for his friends, for his brethren, and he is not willing to part with them; but he would have them serve him freely, and without constraint: he keeps no slaves. This question was put to try them; to give them an occasion of reflecting upon their own happiness, and upon the misery of those who had just forsaken him; and it operated accordingly. It gave occasion for the excellent answer of Peter, which we now proceed to consider.

II. *Then Simon Peter answered him* LORD, *to whom shall we go?* THOU *hast the words of eternal life.*

In this answer, we see the character of the man who made it. Peter was bold and forward; but sincere, affectionate, and candid. He speaks in the name of all his brethren, taking it for granted they were all of the same mind; though, alas! there was a Judas, a devil, among them; one who had "no part nor lot in this matter!" Peter answers the question of our Lord by another question, *To whom shall we go?* We seek eternal life, and where can we find it but in

thee? It is as if he had said, 'Whose disciples shall we be, if we cease to be thine? Shall we go to the heathen philosophers for instruction? They are become vain in their imaginations; professing themselves to be wise, they are fools in the matter of eternal life. Shall we go to the Scribes and Pharisees? They are blind leaders of the blind. Shall we go to Moses? He will send us back to thee. Therefore we will stay where we are; we shall never do better.'

It is observable that in Peter's answer *eternal life* appears to be the grand object of the disciples; and the reason why they should not forsake Christ is, because he has the words of eternal life. He teaches the true *doctrine* of eternal life, and he is able and willing to give us eternal life, as his discourse has largely shown. Let it then be remembered that

Serious thoughts of eternity, and sincere desires for eternal life, have a powerful tendancy to prevent apostacy.

Serious thoughts of eternity! Alas! how few possess them! In how few do they abide and operate! How few live under the daily impression of the *shortness of time*, and the *length of eternity!*—which is as much as to say, how few are believers! For it is the office of faith to look foward to things "not seen," and to be influenced by them as if they were present. And, indeed, this forms the grand distinction between the children of God and the children of this world. He that is of the earth is earthly; he thinks and speaks of earthly things: he that is born of heaven, is heavenly-minded. "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit." And it highly concerns each of us to know which of these is our character; it must be one; there is no middle state. And according to our state here, such will be our state hereafter. If eternal life be not our pursuit it will never be our portion.

Those who are duly affected with eternal things, will certainly be desirous of instruction; they will seriously inquire how eternal life may be obtained. "What shall we do to be saved?" is the substance of their inquiry. Even the people who forsook Christ, asked a question of this kind, ver. 28:—"What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" Our Lord gave them this plain answer:—"This is the work of God that ye believe in me." He also declares, "He that believeth on me shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

Every thing that relates to eternal life depends on Jesus. *He has the words of eternal life.* He discovered it more fully, and revealed it more plainly, than any of the prophets. His Gospel gives us a clear account of the blessed life, and immortal glory of soul and body in the heavenly world. It shows us the true and spiritual nature of that state, and what will be the business and blessedness of glorified saints. It leaves us to no uncertain conjectures, poetical fancies, or sensual notions of Paradise; but clearly describes it as a state of knowledge, purity, and bliss, in the presence of Immanuel, God with us.

The true and only *way* to eternal life is revealed by Christ. Many ways have been devised by men; a thousand superstitions have been invented by crafty or deluded men, and imposed upon the world, as means of obtaining eternal felicity. Every country and every impostor has produced something with this view! and carnal men still ludicrously and profanely talk of every one's setting up his own ladder to heaven. But away with these. Christ has the words of eternal life. "Whether I go," said he to his disciples, "ye know, and *the way* ye know," John xiv. 4. Thomas, mistaking his meaning, said, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?" This mistake gave occasion for a charming declaration on our Lord's part. "Jesus saith unto him, I am

the WAY,—the TRUTH, and the LIFE: no man cometh unto the Father but by me." No words before were ever so plain. The substance of this great truth was indeed taught by sacrifices. These preached the necessity of a Mediator, and showed, that without shedding of blood there could be no remission of sins; but it remained for him who is the *Truth*, the substance of all the Old Testament types, himself to say, *I am the way.* Christ, by his death, opened the gates of heaven. The cross of Christ is the only key that opens the door of glory. "We have boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus." This alludes to the High Priest of the Jews, who, once a year, went into the Holy of Holies with the blood of an animal. The way into this was by the veil which separated it from the Holy place. Our way to heaven is through the veil of Christ's body, crucified for us; and it is remarkable that at the time of his death, the veil of the temple was rent in two, without hands, from the top to the bottom: which signified that every obstruction to our entrance into heaven was removed by the death of Jesus; so that we may now draw near to God, and enter into glory, in full assurance of faith.

The words of Christ are "the words of eternal life" on another account; they are the *means* and *instrument* of that new and spiritual life in the soul, whereby it is prepared for eternal life. *The words that I speak unto you*, said our Lord, verse 63 of this chapter, *they are spirit, and they are life;* they are to be taken, not in a carnal, but in a spiritual sense; and they are the means of conveying the Holy Spirit, whose influence is effectual unto spiritual and eternal life. It is by the Gospel that "Christ speaketh from heaven; and when the Gospel is accompanied with the power of the Spirit, the dead hear the voice of the Son of God, and live. For this purpose it was that the apostles, though forbidden of men, were commanded of Christ to

"go, stand and speak in the temple to the people *all the words of this life.*" By the same words the children of God are directed, established, encouraged, and nourished unto eternal life.

In the view of advantages like these, well might Peter say, "Lord to whom shall we go?" Eternal life is our aim;—thy words reveal it;—thou showest us the way to it;—thou art thyself the way;—thy word is the seed of life in our souls;—yea, thou art eternal life. To whom then can we go? We cannot, we dare not, we will not forsake thee.

Such, my brethren, are the sentiments of every gracious soul. With such views as these we shall "cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart," and abhor the thoughts of apostacy from him.

APPLICATION.

Have we *come* to Christ?—Are *we*, in any sense, his followers? If not, as we have already said, we cannot forsake him; but our case is no less dangerous. Woe be to those who, in a Christian land, a land of Bibles and of sermons, "refuse to hear him that speaketh from heaven!" Woe be to us if he should say to us, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life!" O consider of it, thoughtless souls. If you would have eternal life, and surely you wish for it, remember you must have *the words* of eternal life; you must learn the way of life;—you must be interested in Jesus, who is the life. The Lord incline you, while it is called To-day, to hear his voice and live!

What we have heard of the words of life should endear them to us. The doctrines of grace are not idle speculations, or needless disputings about words and names;—they are not a vain thing;—they are words of life. O then "let the word of Christ dwell in us richly! let us lay it up in our hearts, and prize it above our chief treasure!

And now let us consider Christ himself as putting this question to each one of us, *Wilt thou go*

away! Others do. We live in a day when great numbers do; like the apostate Jews referred to in our text, their carnal minds, filled with reasoning pride, reject the gospel, revile the Scriptures, deny Christ, and renounce the very name of Christian! The Lord pity them and bring them back again to his fold! But wilt *thou* also go away? O consider well before you go! To *whom* will you go? Will you go to the modern philosophers? Not for eternal life surely! They say there is no such thing; and if you do want eternal life, where will you find it but in Jesus? Will you go back into the world? Alas! it is vain, and will deceive you. Will you return to sin and folly? It will insure your eternal death Resolve, then, with Peter, to cleave to Christ.

But pray for persevering grace. Be sensible of your own weakness, and pray, "Lord, leave me not to my own will!" You must watch and pray continually. Resist the first motions to coldness, negligence, and apostacy; guard against the seductions of the world, and the bewitching pleasures of sin. And may God fulfil his gracious promise,—"I will put my fear in their heart, and they shall not depart from me."

"Lord thou alone hast pow'r, I know,
To save a wretch like me;
To whom, or whither shall I go,
If I should turn from thee?

"No voice but thine can give me rest,
And bid my fears depart;
No love but thine can make me blest,
And satisfy my heart.

"What anguish has that question stirr'd—
If I will also go?
Yet, Lord relying on thy word,
I humbly answer, No,!"

NEWTON.

SERMON XLIV.

LUKE II. 15.

Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass.

THE wise man observes, That "the eye is not satisfied with seeing." The truth of this observation is confirmed by the experience of all ages; only it admits of one exception; there is *one* object, and only one, which can satisfy the eye of the mind, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. We have a proof of this in good old Simeon, mentioned in the 29th and 30th verses of this Chapter. He had long waited for Christ, "the consolation of Israel," and he lived to see the infant Saviour brought into the temple; when clasping the holy child in his feeble arms, "he blessed God, and said Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."—Some of the Turks it is said, put out their eyes, as soon as they have seen Mahomet's tomb, because they would not defile them again by regarding any common object. Does superstition teach them so to admire the grave of a wicked impostor?—O let us as Christians, hasten to behold a sight of real glory; let us "turn away our eyes from beholding vanities;" let us fix them upon the adorable Jesus; let us say with the admiring shepherds in our text, when just informed of the Saviour's birth, "Let us now go, even to Bethlehem, and see this thing which is to come to pass."

It was to *shepherds:* poor, honest, industrious

men, that the good news was first announced —an encouraging circumstance for the poor of this world; and an encouragement for such to be "diligent in business;" for it was when the shepherds were watching their flocks by night that these glad tidings where brought them. An angel delivered the message; and a multitude of angels joined in chorus,—*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace; good-will towards men.* Here humility and glory were joined in their extremes. He empties himself of his heavenly glory; he takes upon him human nature; his mother is a poor woman; a common inn is the place of his birth; he is born in a stable; he is laid in a manger. O deep humiliation of the Son of God, the Creator of the world!—and yet, behold the glory! A new Star directs the wise men of the East to the honoured spot; and a multitude of ministering spirits hymn his birth. Never was the birth of any earthly prince so highly honoured.

God gives us *information,* to put us upon *action.* When the shepherds were informed of what had happened, and where it happened, it put them upon action. Is the Saviour born in the city of David? Let us go then, said they, and see him. The wise men made the same improvement of their information. They saw his star in a distant country, and they followed its direction till they came to Bethlehem.

Let us learn another piece of instruction from them: "Let us go *now,*" said they. What at midnight! Cool Reason would have said, it is an unseasonable hour; and Covetousness would have said, What must become of our flocks? But these plain men, who had left their beds to attend their flocks, now leave their flocks to inquire after their Saviour. Let religion then be our *first* business; it is "the one thing needful:" and what we do in it, let us do it quickly: the sooner the better, without a moment's delay.

We may learn another thing from their example:

"Let *us* go," said they: they excited one another to this good work. Let the advantages of society be brought into religion. How many, especially in holiday seasons, will say one to another, "Let us go to such an amusement, such a public house, such a party of pleasure!"—Let us rather say, "Let us go up to the house of the Lord, and he will teach us of his ways." Let us go to Bethlehem, and see Jesus.

The shepherds did as they proposed: "They came with *haste*, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger." They believed before they came; but now their faith is confirmed by sight. They were gratified and edified by the view; and "they returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had *heard* and *seen*."

Let *us*, then, who are here present imitate these happy and simple-hearted men. Let us go to *Bethlehem;* the name signifies *the house of bread;* there in the contemplation of Jesus, may we find bread for our souls!

To excite your serious attention to this divine object, let me inform you what you may expect to see:

DEITY DISPLAYED,
MAN REDEEMED, and
SATAN RUINED.

Let us go to Bethlehem, and see *Deity displayed.* The first promise that God made to guilty man was, that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head." Jesus Christ as to the flesh is the seed of the woman; but he is also infinitely more. St. Paul says, "When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman," Gal. iv. 4. It was necessary to our redemption that the Saviour of men should be a *man;* for the same nature that sinned must bear the punishment of sin. But, had Christ been produced in the ordinary way of human generation, he must have been a partaker of a sinful nature: this was prevented by the miraculous way of his conception, by the power of the Holy Ghost. Thus, that *holy thing* which

was born of the blessed Virgin, was to be called *the Son of God*, "holy, harmless, undefiled, and seperate from sinners; fit to become "sin for us, because he knew no sin."

In what manner the *human* nature was united to the *divine* we cannot tell:—it is enough for us, that it was so united. The testimony of Scripture is most abundant and satisfactory on this head. Let the following suffice. *His name shall be called* IMMANUEL, *which signifies* GOD WITH US. Matt. i. 23. *In the beginning was the* WORD; *and the* WORD *was with* GOD, *and the* WORD was GOD. And the WORD was made *flesh*, and dwelt among us, John i. 1, and 14. St. Paul assures us, 1 Tim. iii. 15, 16, that this is *the pillar and ground of the truth; and without controversy, the great mystery of godliness;* namely, that *God was manifest in the flesh.*

O glorious and pleasing truth, God is manifest in the flesh! Surely it is highly desirable for feeble mortals to know their Maker; and, because we could not ascend to him, lo, he descends to us! Deplorable darkness had long covered the earth, and the wisest of men bowed down "to an unknown God;" but glory be to his name, "the only begotten Son, who was in the bosom of the Father he hath declared him." John i. 18. This is he who is "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person;"—"the image of the invisible God." Heb. i. 3. This is he "who, being in the form of God, and thinking it no robbery to be equal with God," condescends to become a man, a poor man, a servant; that we, through his poverty, might become eternally rich. By his heavenly doctrine,—by his astonishing miracles,—in his lovely disposition, and especially in his divine Person, God was manifested to man. *Show us the Father* (saith one of his disciples to him) *and it sufficeth us.* Philip wanted some *visible* representation of God, such as was sometimes granted to the prophets. Jesus, in a way of gentle rebuke, replied, *Have I been so long*

time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? and then added these remarkable words, fully proving that God was manifest in the flesh:—*He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.* John xiv. 8, 9. "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? Henceforth ye have known him and seen him," ver. 7, 10. "I and my Father are one," Jesus Christ, then, is God manifested in the flesh. Let us go to Bethlehem, and see this great sight: Angels desire to look into it. Glorious mystery! We cannot fully comprehend it. "Men may speak and write of it; but it is not so proper to describe it, as to say that it cannot be described. We may speak of it; but the most we can say about it is, that it is unspeakable; and the most we know is, that it passeth knowledge!" Suffice it that we believe and adore. Let but "the light shine into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ," and it is enough; we will dwell at Bethlehem all our days, until he shall remove us to Bethel above, where we hope no longer to see "through a glass darkly, but face to face."

II. Let us go to Bethlehem and behold *Man redeemed!*

The redemption of fallen, guilty, helpless man, was the grand design of the Saviour's birth. *God sent his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to* REDEEM *them that were under the law.* He was named JESUS, because he came to "save his people from their sins." There is something delightful in the name *Saviour.* Cicero, the Roman orator, said that, when travelling in Greece, he saw a pillar inscribed with this word, SAVIOUR. He admired the fulness of the name; but he knew not its Christian meaning. How much more may the redeemed sinner admire it!—

"'Tis music in the sinner's ears;
'Tis life, and health, and peace."

It was in this character that the saints of old long expected his appearance. "To him gave all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him should receive remission of sins." About the time of his coming the godly people in Jerusalem were "looking for redemption," and, with Simeon, "waiting for the consolation of Israel." Our Lord himself declares this to be the chief design of his coming:—"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not *perish*, but have everlasting life." John iii. 16. Observe, it was to save sinners from *perishing;* for perish we must, without an interest in him. Do *we* know this? Why do we call him a *Saviour*, if we see not our need of deliverance? and from what?—from *sin* and from *hell.* If we are not saved from sin here, we shall not be saved from hell hereafter.

"*God sent his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh; and* (by making him a sacrifice) *for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.*" Rom. viii. 3. Mark how the Son of God appeared?—"in the likeness of sinful flesh;" his nature was perfectly pure; but it had the likeness of ours, which is wholly corrupt. "He knew no sin; none in nature, none in practice. He had "a clean heart and pure hands." He could challenge his bitterest enemies to convince him of sin; yea, he defied Satan himself, the great accuser:—"The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me." Thus he was a pure and spotless Lamb, fit to become a sacrifice for sin. Under the law, every victim must be perfect, and without blemish. It was necessary the Lamb of God should be so; for "he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin." 1 John iii. 5.

Being thus pure and holy, the sins of the whole church were laid upon him. "He was made sin *for us;*" "he suffered for our sins;" "the Lord laid upon him our iniquities" "he bore our sins, in his own body, on the tree." And thus God

condemned sin in the flesh: he condemned our sin in the flesh of Christ; he showed his extreme hatred of it; he passed sentence of death upon it; and executed that sentence in the dreadful death of our Lord. And thus, the condemning of sin in Christ our Surety, prevents the condemnation of our persons for it. And this is the ground of that excellent privilege mentioned Rom. viii. 1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." But this is not all: the end and design of this is, *that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.* Thus the perfect righteousness, demanded by the moral law, is fulfilled *in us;* not in us *personally*, but by our Surety in *our nature* and in *our stead;* and so might be deemed, in legal estimation, to be fulfilled *for* and *by* all those of us who truly believe, and who prove the sincerity of our faith by a holy walk.

O the grace and love of the blessed Jesus! He, the most high God, blessed for evermore, consented to become man. He who was *life*, and gave life to all, became a mortal man. He *was born to die. Because we were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same.* O love beyond example or degree!

"O for this love let rocks and hills
Their lasting silence break;
And all harmonious human tongues
The Saviour's praises speak."

Thus Jesus "delivered us from the wrath to come." Our sin deserved *wrath;* the wrath that is *to come:* for God bears with sinners now, and "endures with much long-suffering, the vessels of wrath which are fitted for destruction." But God is reconciled to every believer in Jesus. "He was angry; but his anger is turned away." Those who believe "have passed from death unto life:" those who are "redeemed from the curse of the law, receive the adop-

tion of sons." They are also redeemed from the power and dominion of sin; it shall not reign in their mortal bodies. They are redeemed to God; body, soul, spirit, substance, talents; all they have, and all they are, belong to the Lord: and when they have served him and their generation, during his appointed time, he will take them to himself, and they shall know the full meaning of that comprehensive phrase, ETERNAL LIFE.—Such are the inestimable blessings which Jesus, the Redeemer of man, came to procure. But let us take another turn to Bethlehem, and see,

III. *Satan ruined,*

It was Satan, the head of all fallen spirits, who, assuming the form of a cunning serpent, seduced our first mother in the garden; and, employing her as the tempter of Adam, seduced our first father also. Thus were the flood-gates of sin opened in our world. Thus Satan usurped a sovereign authority over the souls of men; insomuch that, in sacred scripture, he is distinguished by the names of "the Prince of this World;" yea, "the God of this World." He hath set up an opposite throne to that of God: he rules in the hearts of the children of disobedience, who are led captive by him at his will. Millions of souls have readily submitted to his chains, and have lived and died in love with their bondage. Cruel tyrant! who shall deliver us from thy destructive power?

It was when our fallen parents stood trembling before the Judge, expecting every moment to taste the threatened death; it was then that a dawn of mercy glimmered in the first gospel-promise. Gen. iii. 14, 15. The LORD, turning to the serpent who seduced them, utters this curse:—"Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field. Upon thy belly shalt thou go; and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life. And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed. It shall bruise thy head; and thou shalt bruise his

heel." No doubt the *devil* is here condemned, under the name of the Serpent, because he had abused that creature in order to deceive man. He is cursed; for "everlasting fire is prepared for him and his angels." His power was to be contracted; he was to creep, not fly; his power should be restrained to *the dust;* that is, to *earthly-minded men*, or to the *bodies* of the saints. His *head* was to be bruised; that is, his power was to be finally destroyed by Jesus Christ; for so St. John expounds it:—"The Son of God was manifested to destroy the works of the devil." The Serpent's poison, craft, and life, are in his head; if this be bruised he is destroyed. Jesus Christ in his temptation, baffled the tempter in all his cunning assaults. He cast out devils from the bodies of men; he enabled his disciples to do the same; and empowered them "to tread on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy;" and he has promised also to his people, "that he will bruise Satan under *their* feet shortly."

God also declared there should be "constant enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman; which includes the *sanctification* of all the elect. Unconverted men are at peace with the devil; but, when grace comes, war commences; and God will make the believer more than a conqueror.

But all this is in consequence of the birth of Jesus. He is most eminently "the seed of the woman; "The Son of God, made of a woman." By the merit of his death, and by the grace of his Spirit, he destroys the power of the old serpent. Satan was indeed allowed "to bruise his *heel:*" and he did so, by his agents, when he prevailed to procure the crucifiction of our Lord; but it was then, even then, that he bruised Satan's *head*, and laid the foundation of his everlasting destruction. Never before did fallen spirits discover so much opposition to Christ. "They were aware, probably, of Christ's design to overturn their empire; therefore they mustered all

their forces, employed all their skill; and, as all was at stake, made one strong effort in a kind of decisive engagement. They armed every proper instrument, and set every engine at work; temptations, persecutions, violence, slander, treachery, and the like. Our Lord, whom they opposed, made no formidable appearance; he was despised of men, a worm, and no man. But this made the event more glorious. It was a spectacle worth the admiration of the universe, to see the despised Galilean turn all the artillery of hell back upon itself; to see one in the likeness of men, wresting the keys of hell and death out of the hands of the devil! to see him entangle the powers of darkness in their own net, and make them ruin their own designs with their own stratagems! They made one disciple betray him, and another deny him; they made the Jews accuse him, and the Romans crucify him. But these were the very means of spoiling and triumphing over themselves. Col. ii. 15. The cruelty of Satan and his instruments was made subservient to the designs of infinite mercy; and the sins of men over-ruled for "making an end of sin, and bringing in everlasting righteousness."*

Thus was "the Prince of this World judged." Christ by his death, "hath destroyed him that had the power of death," and rendered this evident, by the miracles that attended his Gospel, and the power of his grace in the experience of all believers. All the effects of Satan's usurpation shall finally be abolished. Christ shall reign universally through the earth. Satan shall be bound for a thousand years; and, though loosed for a short season, shall be utterly cast out, and confined to hell. The grave shall resign all its dead; and Jehovah Jesus shall reign for ever "The Lord God omnipotent." Glory, glory, glory be to him!

* See *Maclaurin's* most admirable Sermon on glorying in the Cross of Christ.

APPLICATION.

Having been to Bethlehem, to see this thing which is to come to pass, let us now, like the shepherds, "return, glorifying God for all the things we have heard and seen." We have learned, that in the incarnation of the Son of God we may see *Deity displayed, Man redeemed, and Satan ruined.* How vast and glorious are these designs of a Saviour's birth! The angels knew this when they sang "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good-will towards men." But are these purposes of his appearance answered as to *us?* Is God, in all his glorious perfections, manifested in the Person of Jesus? Well does this attract *our* notice, and engage our souls to adore, and love, and praise him, magnifying the God of Israel? "The Lord hath visited and *redeemed* his people." Are *we* among his redeemed? Are we actually redeemed from the guilt and power of our own sins, and from the follies and vanities of this world? The throne of Satan is shaken; but is his power in *us* abolished? Are *we* "delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son?"

This is the way in which we are to consider this grand event; and if the ends of Christ's birth be answered *in our own experience,* we have abundant cause for joy. But then it will not be the vain, frothy, carnal joy of the world.—The manner in which some pretend to celebrate the birth of Christ, at a season called *Christmas,* is a disgrace to a Christian nation. They contradict, as much as possible, the design of his coming. He came "to destroy the works of the devil;" they try to keep them up. What have cards, dancing, songs, gluttony, and drunkenness to do with the birth of Jesus? He came to save his people *from their sins,* not *in them.* O let young people guard against the temptations of such a season; for there is more sin

committed at Christmas in a few days, than in many weeks at other times; and the sin is the more aggravated, as it passes under the notion of religious joy. But it is an affront to a holy God, a reproach to the Christian name, and ruinous to the souls of men.

Let us go to Bethlehem, let us, like Mary, "ponder these things in our hearts." No sooner did the shepherds hear of him, than they ran to inquire after him. Let us also say, "We would see Jesus." And where shall we see him but in his house, in his word; and if we seek him earnestly, we shall find that the church of God is still at *Bethlehem*, "a house of bread." God will feed our souls with the "bread which came down from heaven, and which endureth to eternal life."

We may also *see* and *serve him* in his poor members. "The poor we have also with us." As Christ was found in the stable, so we may find some of his in a cottage, in a garret, forsaken and destitute. Let us go and visit poor families, sick persons, fatherless children, in honour of him who was "wrapt in swadling clothes, and lay in a manger; he will accept the kindness, and say, "Inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me."

SERMON XLV.

GAL. VI. 14.

God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world.

THE Apostle Paul, whose words these are, had good reason for glorying in the Cross of Christ; he tells us in the text how useful it was to him.—And whoever obtains the true knowledge of "Christ crucified," will, like him, "determine to know nothing else," and "esteem all things but loss for the excellency of it." It is well known that the cross of Christ "was a stumbling block" to the Jews:—nothing offended them so much as the plainness, the poverty, the sufferings, and death of Jesus: but St. Paul gloried in the cross; yea, he would glory in nothing else. The Jews gloried in their relation to Abraham, in their temple, in their religious ceremonies; but he, who knew that these were but "shadows of good things to come," gloried in the substance, gloried in the cross of Christ.

"The cross of Christ" signifies, either *our sufferings for him*, or *his sufferings for us*, In the former sense, we are to "take up the cross," and follow him; but here we are to understand *his sufferings for us;* for these are what the Apostles gloried in. "The Cross of Christ," sometimes includes the whole Gospel, the doctrine of him who died on the cross; of which his meritorious death for sinners is the most principal part.

As the cross of Christ is of so much use to a

Christian, let us, *first*, Take a view of it, or contemplate the sufferings of Christ upon it; and then, *secondly*, Consider its practical uses, or the reasons we have for glorying in it.

I. Let us contemplate the sufferings of our Lord.

But how or where shall we begin? Let no one rush into this solemn work in a thoughtless manner. Few persons are properly prepared for it. A mind polluted with sensual pleasures, or a heart crowded with worldly cares, is ill qualified for the task. When Moses approached the burning bush, he was commanded to take off his shoes, for the place on which he stood was holy ground. *Gethsemane* and *Calvary* are also holy Ground. Let us approach with godly fear, not with vain curiosity; and may the good Spirit of God, the glorifier of Jesus, take these sacred things respecting his "agony and bloody sweat, his cross and passion," and so show them to us, that we may repent, believe, and rejoice!

We ought to remember, that the whole life of Christ was a life of suffering. He was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." For our sakes he became poor, and endured the contradiction of sinners against himself. But we must now confine our meditations to his last sufferings, *in the garden*, *during his trial*, and at *Golgotha*.

Our blessed Lord, having "loved his own which were in the world, he loved them to the end;" and gave a most affecting proof of it, by washing their feet, celebrating the passover with them, instituting the sacred supper, and by his pathetic discourse and affectionate prayers. He then went forth out of the city, accompanied by all the apostles, except Judas, who was preparing to betray him, to a garden, where he used to retire, and had spent many nights in devotion. At the entrance of this, he left eight of the disciples, taking Peter, James, and John to a separate place, where they were spectators of his distress.

Then Jesus "began to be sorrowful, and very

heavy:"—to be "sore amazed."—The words signify much more than they express; "they imply, that he was possessed with fear, horror, and amazement; encompassed with grief, and overwhelmed with sorrow; pressed down with consternation and dejection of mind; tormented with anxiety and disquietude of spirit."

How vast must that pressure have been which obliged *him* to complain, and to complain to his inferiors!—"My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death!" He was in an "AGONY!"—a word used no where else in the New Testament;—an agony so great and astonishing, that "his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground." In this extreme distress he betook himself to prayer; he first kneeled down, and afterwards fell on his face upon the ground, saying, "O Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me! nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt."

What a mysterious scene is this! What could be the occasion of this agony! It was no human enemy that hurt him; nor was it the fear of his approaching death. Probably, it was some peculiar conflict with the powers of darkness; for this was "their hour." Perhaps, the restraint usually laid on these malignant spirits was now removed; and who can tell what terrors they may inflict, if permitted? Probably, our Lord had now before his eyes the collected guilt of millions of sinners, and the intolerable misery due to their iniquities: and what an agony must this occasion, when an individual finds one "wounded spirit" more than he can bear!

Here stop, and see "the sinfulness of sin." Perhaps you have seen it only in the garden of pleasure, wearing the mask of happiness—here, in the garden of sorrow, behold sin stripped of its mask.—See, in the agony of Jesus, its true nature and proper effects. "The wages of sin is death;" therefore the soul of Christ was sorrowful, "even unto death." See here a specimen of that "indignation and wrath, tribula-

tion and anguish," which every soul of man not interested in Christ must suffer; not for a few hours, but to all eternity. And here, believer, see what thou must have suffered, if Jesus had not suffered it for thee. But "it pleased the Lord to bruise him and put him to grief," that thou mayest be filled with joy unspeakable. He drank this bitter cup, that he might put into thy hand the sweet cup of salvation.

Our Lord, who knew before-hand all things which should befal him, intimated to his disciples the near approach of the traitor Judas,—"Rise," said he, "let us be going; he is at hand that betrayeth me." This infamous man had sold his affectionate Master to the priests; and, knowing the place of his retirement, comes attended with an armed force; yet, still pretending friendship, salutes him with a kiss, which was the appointed signal for his apprehension. Jesus offers no resistance, nor attempts to escape. The Lamb of God freely offers himself up; and with surprising intrepidity and composure, tells them who he is. He could have slain them all in a moment; for he no sooner uttered the words *I am He*, than his enemies drew back, and "fell to the ground," as if they had been struck with lightening. He asked nothing for himself; but desires a passport to ensure the safety of those slothful disciples, who had been too careless to watch with him one hour. He rebukes Peter for using his sword, and kindly heals the officer whom he had wounded. "Then all his disciples forsook him, and fled."

Now let us follow our Lord from the garden, through the streets of Jerusalem, bound and hurried along, as if he had been a thief, from one part of the city to another: first to the house of Annas, and then to the palace of Caiaphas, where, though it was night, the principal part of the sanhedrim were met to receive their prisoner.

And here what horrid injustice reigned. So innocent was he, that his enemies were forced to contrive to forge the shadow of a charge against him. They

could scarcely find any villains hardy enough to come forward and accuse him. At length two witnesses arose, pretending that, three years before, he had talked about destroying the temple, and rebuilding it in three days. This foolish charge, founded on a gross perversion of his words, was deemed sufficient ground of accusation; and accordingly early in the morning, he was brought before the great council and put upon his defence. But he thought proper to decline any vindication of himself before bloody men, who were determined to murder him. Thus "he was oppressed and afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth."

Being adjured by the High Priest to declare whether he was the Messiah, the Son of the blessed God, he affirmed it fully. These wretched hypocrites, taking the advantage of his confession, and pretending great concern for the honour of God, charged him with blasphemy, and immediately adjudged him to death.

But as the power of life and death was, in a great measure, taken from them by the Romans, instead of putting him to death by stoning, they took him to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor; who, at their request, proceeded to his trial. Here, with malignant cunning, they charge him, not with blasphemy, but with *sedition*, refusing to pay tribute to Cæsar, and calling himself a king, in opposition to the emperor. Our Lord was still silent; at which Pilate was astonished. Pilate having examined him privately, was satisfied of his innocence, and wished to discharge him. But the Jews increased their vehemence against him, insisting upon it that he should be put to death. To which at length Pilate, an unjust time serving man, reluctantly consented.

Shocking were the insults which he endured at various times and places, from the officers of the priests and from the soldiers. He was mocked,

buffetted, spit upon, blindfolded, crowned with thorns, and most severely scourged. But thus was the Scripture fulfilled; for it is remarkable that every particular part of his sufferings was predicted long before by the prophets; and thus, under the influence of their own wicked passions, they, unwittingly, accomplished the divine decrees, "for to do whatsoever his hand and counsel determined before to be done." Acts iv. 27.

And now they speedily proceed to the execution of the unjust and bloody sentence. And he, bearing his cross, went forth to a place called Golgotha, or the place of a skull, for there the bodies of many criminals were buried. O how different a procession was this from one which had passed the streets a few days before! Then the multitude welcomed him into the city, shouting Hosanna!—now they hasten his death as a malefactor, crying "Away with him, crucify him." So little is popular applause to be regarded. A few, indeed, sympathize with our suffering Lord; but he, affected more with their future woe than with his own present sufferings, says,—"Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children."

Fatigued, and ready to faint with pain, loss of blood, and the weight of the cross, which he carried upon his bleeding shoulders, Cymon, a stranger, is compelled to bear it for him. At length they arrive at the place: it was "without the city," in answer to the types of old; which required that the sin offerings should be made without the camp; and as an example to us, that we should be willing to follow him "without the camp bearing his reproach." The cross, being laid upon the ground, the sacred body of our Lord, now stripped of his garments, is laid upon it stretched as upon a rack, and fastened to it with large spike nails, cruelly driven through his hands and his feet. The cross was then drawn upright, its foot being placed in a hole dug for the purpose;—there our Lord hangs; the whole weight of

his blessed body bearing upon the wounded parts of it. Not content with the corporeal pains he endured, the cruel people endeavour to aggravate them by bitter taunts and reproaches. They amused themselves with his misery; they ridiculed his pretending to be the Son of God, and the King of Israel; his rebuilding the temple. They bid him "come down from the cross," and then they would believe on him: they tell him "to save himself," if he could save others. And in all this the chief priests and scribes, forgetting their dignity, joined the unthinking rabble.

Thus "it behoved Christ to suffer;" and thus the "scriptures were fulfilled." Thus was he "*lifted up*," like his type, the brazen serpent, in the wilderness. He was "cut off, but not for himself," as Daniel predicted. "They pierced his hands and his feet," as said the Psalmist: he was "mocked, scourged, and crucified," as himself had before declared: "they cast lots for his garments," and "he was numbered with the transgressors."

In this painful situation our Lord continued for several hours; for it was a slow, lingering, and extremely painful kind of death: it was also *shameful* in the highest degree;—a gallows and a gibbet are not names of greater infamy among us, than that of the *cross* then was. It was also deemed *an accursed death.*—By the law of Moses, a person hanged upon a tree, was deemed *accursed of God.* Alluding to this, St. Paul says, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."—Gal. iii. 13.

Our Lord, who, when at large, went about doing good, continued to manifest his benevolence, even upon the cross. He prays for his unfeeling murderers:—"Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." To the penitent thief, he said, "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." He committed the care of his mother to John, his beloved disciple. All this was done while he suffered the

most shocking pains. But the agony of his mind, it should seem, far exceeded them:—he was suffering the wrath of God due to sin. The horrible darkness that for three hours covered the land, was an emblem of the more dreadful darkness and terror of soul which he endured, and which extorted that mysterious cry—"My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?"

But the painful scene draws to a close. All the prophecies were fulfilled: all the Father gave him to do was accomplished: his sufferings, therefore, must terminate. Exulting, then, in the completion of his vast and glorious work, he cried, *It is finished;* and then, that with his dying breath he might teach *us* how to die, he said, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit; and having said thus, "bowing his head, he gave up the ghost," or *dismissed his spirit.*

Thus have we taken a brief view of the Cross of Christ. We have seen the blessed Redeemer taken and bound as a thief; hurried from place to place through the night; unjustly condemned, both in the ecclesiastical and civil court; treated with all the indignity and insult that hellish malice could devise; buffetted, scourged, and spit upon; and at length put to death on the cross. In all this the carnal eye beholds nothing but weakness, pain, and ignominy; but the enlightened eye of Faith sees a beauty, a grandeur, a glory, far surpassing the brightest objects of sense. So far from blushing at the meanness or shame of the cross, the true believer will cordially unite with St. Paul, and say,—*God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Let us then proceed to consider,

II. The reasons we have for glorying in the cross.

Many reasons may be offered; but we have room to mention only three. By the cross of Christ, the perfections of God are displayed; the believing sinner is fully justified; and provision is made for his sanctification.

We glory in the cross of Christ, because God is glorified in it. The *goodness*, *mercy*, and *love* of God appear in all his gifts to men; but most of all in this *unspeakable gift*. Of no other gift is it said "God so loved the world as to bestow it." "Herein is love;" a love so great, that it includes and insures every other good; "for he that spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us all, will assuredly deny us nothing good." And, O, "the manifold wisdom" that beams from the cross! How deep the contrivance, to make "mercy and truth meet together,—righteousness and peace embrace each other!" Never did the spotless *holiness* and the inflexible *justice* of God appear with such awful splendour as at Calvary. Not all the sufferings of the damned can put such honour on the holy law as it received from the sufferings of Jesus upon the cross: those sufferings "magnified the law, and made it honourable." Thus God "declared his justice in the remission of sins," so that the law, as well as the sinner, may justly glory in the cross of Christ; for both receive eternal honour from it.

Again, That which endears the cross of Christ to believers is, That from thence they derive free and full justification; they are "justified freely, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." How glorious is that declaration,—"The Lord laid upon him the iniquities of us all!"—That heavy burden, enough to crush a world, was borne by him; and, blessed be God, borne away by him; so borne away, that, if sought for, it should not be found. We behold, then, in a crucified Saviour, "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." The real Christian will glory in nothing else: he places no dependence on his prayers, his repentance, his duties, his charity, his sufferings; all these are for ever discarded, in respect of justification by them. To trust upon these, in whole or in part, would be the greatest dishonour to Christ, and render his cross a needless useless thing. This he abhors from his

heart, as the vilest blasphemy and sacrilege; and therefore sincerely says, with the apostle, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

But there is another reason for glorying in the cross; namely, it is the cause and the instrument of our *sanctification*:—hereby the world is crucified unto us, and we are crucified to the world. Nothing but a spiritual sight of the glory of the cross, and a good hope of personal interest in its blessings, will ever effectually wean our hearts from the world. To be dead to the world, is of the utmost importance in the matter of our sanctification; for the love of the world is the principal source of our sins. We shall never cease to make the world our portion, till we get something better in its stead. It is by the doctrine of Christ that we learn its vanity;—it is by the example of Christ we learn to despise it. His whole humiliation, from the manger to the cross, poured contempt on human greatness, and has sanctified to his followers a life of labour, poverty, and reproach. A true follower of Christ will be ashamed to glory in those worldly objects which our Saviour trampled beneath his feet, while it will sweetly reconcile him to a humble lot, that his master endured the same; and thus will he learn "to deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Jesus."

APPLICATION.

When the people who came together to see the doleful spectacle of the *crucifixion, beheld the things that were done, they smote their breasts and returned.* —And surely, when *we* return from the view of the cross, and consider what we have seen and heard, we have reason to smite our breasts, and be deeply affected with our sins and his sufferings. Nature itself seemed to sympathize with our suffering Lord. The sun was darkened! the earth quaked!

the rocks were torn asunder! the veil of the temple was rent! the graves were opened! and the heathen guards were constrained to say, "Truly, this was the Son of God!" And now, how are *our* hearts affected? is all this "nothing to us?" Can we behold this awful scene with cold indifference? If we can, it may be feared that our hearts are harder than the rocks, and that we have no part or lot in the matter. Surely, this awful spectacle will command our attention, and excite our serious thoughts. Come, you who have loved and lived in sin, who have rolled it as a sweet morsel under your tongues, who have laughed at, and often said, what harm is there in it?—Come, and see the Saviour in his agony, sweating blood! see him buffeted and despised! see him bleeding, groaning, and dying on the cross! And what was all this for? It was for sin!—it was to make atonement for sin. He died,—"the just for the unjust! that he might bring us to God!" It was to save such sinners as you from eternal sufferings.—Such was his love. O sinner, let this love constrain thee to forsake thy sins, and come to him that thou mayest have life.

When I am lifted up, said Jesus, before his crucifixion, *I will draw all men to me.* O what blessed attraction is there in the cross of Christ! Here is salvation: a salvation complete and free: just such as a guilty helpless sinner needs. When *Christ crucified* was first preached by Peter, three thousand souls, and among them perhaps many of his murderers, were drawn to him in one day. To-day, by this sermon, he is lifted up; "crucified before your eyes." O for the power of the Holy Spirit, to draw your hearts to him! Come, and he will receive you; Come, and he will pardon you! Come, and he will give you rest! His arms, once extended on the cross, are still open to receive the chief of sinners. His blood still cleanseth from all sin:

> "Each purple drop proclaims there's room,
> And bids the poor and needy come."

And now, O that every professed disciple of Christ would consider the *latter* part of the text, and ask himself this question,—Is the world crucified to *me*, and *I* to the world? Does the cross of my Saviour throw a salutary shade over the gaudy glories of the world? Is it crucified? Is it a dead, or at least a dying thing, in my esteem? and am I, because of my attachment to the truth, cause, and people of Christ, become like a dead man in the world's esteem?—Such, brethren, in some happy degree, is the true influence of the cross of Christ. —Such is the holy, practical tendency of Gospel truth! and whoever finds this in himself, has abundant cause to glory in the cross of Christ.

May divine grace teach us more and more to esteem the cross of Christ, and to glory in nothing but our knowledge of it, interest in it, expectations from it, and its practical influence on our hearts. Then may we hope, ere long, to see, "the Lamb that was slain, seated in the midst of the throne;" and with our feeble voices to make some little addition to the grand chorus of the redeemed, singing "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain! and who hath redeemed us to God by his blood!"

SERMON XLVI.

LUKE XXIV. 34.

The Lord is risen indeed!

NEVER was there a day of greater gladness than that on which our Lord arose; never was there greater cause for joy; for were not Christ risen, our faith and hope would be in vain, and we should yet be in our sins.

When Jesus Christ was laid in the grave, great was the triumph of his enemies; great the dejection of his friends. The sorrowful disciples had fondly hoped "it had been He who should have redeemed Israel;" but now their hopes are buried in his grave. How great then must have been their surprise and their joy when Jesus actually arose, and appeared to several of them! Our text is an exclamation, expressive of these passions; it was made by the ten apostles to the two brethren who had seen Christ at Emmaus, and who had just returned from thence to relate the joyful news. Before they could well speak, the apostles saluted them with this pleasing sentence:—"The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon." The two disciples, in their turn, communicate what they had seen and heard, and how "Jesus was known to them in breaking of bread." Blessed and heavenly news! well might they all be eager to tell it! The primitive Christians, it is said, used to salute each other on the Lord's day morning with these words, *The Lord is risen!* and it is a pleasing custom still

continued in London, that the boys belonging to Christ's Hospital appear in Easter week, each with a printed label affixed to his coat, having the same inscription, "The Lord is risen." Happy, if those poor children, or the multitude beholding them walk in procession to church, knew the sacred import of that charming sentence! It will be happy for us if now we are taught "the power of his resurrection;" and so contemplate these precious words, "that our faith and hope may be in God!"

We may place the words of our text in three points of view, and consider them as the language of

WONDER, CERTAINTY, and JOY.

I. Let us consider the words as expressive of their *Wonder.*

And yet we wonder it should appear so wonderful to them! Had not our Lord often told them he should rise from the dead? Had he not said "Destroy this temple," meaning his body, "and in three days I will raise it up?" Had he not said "There shall no other sign be given to this generation than the sign of the prophet Jonas; for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth?" Could the disciples forget these sayings? The Jews certainly remembered them, and, therefore, sealed and guarded the sepulchre. There were many intimations of the resurrection in the writings of the prophets. It was evident from the Scriptures, that "thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day." Indeed our Lord rested the whole weight of his mission on this event; to this he referred the whole credibility of all he asserted. It was, therefore, of infinite consequence to the disciples, that their Master should revive, and forsake the tomb.

But who can describe the state of their minds when they saw their Lord in the hands of his foes! bound, tried, condemned, executed, and laid in the

prison of the grave! There was much ignorance and unbelief remaining in them. They had not wholly got rid of their foolish notion of a temporal kingdom; but their hopes of this kind were now completely baffled. They might also have many distressing apprehensions about their own personal safety. In short, they were perplexed and distressed beyond measure; and they had either forgotten what Christ had said of rising again, or did not clearly understand it, or desponded as to the event.

Great, therefore, was their surprise and astonishment when first informed of his resurrection. Mary Magdalene, and some other pious women, were the first witnesses of the fact; they ran to inform Peter and John, who immediately hastened to the spot; they found the tomb open, and the grave-clothes left in it, but saw not Jesus. But Peter afterwards saw him. He made himself known to the two disciples at Emmaus on the same day. The news quickly spread among them all; and though they were "slow of heart to believe," they were constrained to admit the fact; but they were overpowered with surprise and astonishment, and this they expressed in the text, "the Lord is risen indeed!" But,

II. These words imply THE CERTAINTY *of this important fact*, "The Lord is risen *indeed*:"—strange as it is, it is true; and is absolutely certain: we are perfectly satisfied of it. And this certainty was immediately afterwards abundantly confirmed; for, while they were yet speaking, he appeared in the midst of them; and, to convince them he was not a mere spirit, not only shewed them his wounded hands and feet, but also ate and drank with them.

The certainty of this event is of the utmost consequence. This great Pillar bears all the weight of the Christian system; and could the Samson of infidelity remove it, the whole fabric must fall to the ground. But, blessed be God, we have no fears on this head. We know that "we have not followed

cunningly devised fables," but that this grand truth comes to us confirmed by *many infallible proofs*, on which our faith securely rests. Acts i. 3. Let us examine some of these:—

1. *The very fear of imposition* tended to this certainty. The chief priests having heard that Christ declared he should rise again, applied to Pilate, saying, "Sir, we remember that *that* deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command, therefore, that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night and steal him away, and say unto the people he is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first." Matt. xxvii. 62. Pilate complied with their wishes. The huge stone that secured the entrance of the sepulchre was sealed with the public seal, which none might break upon pain of death; and a strong guard of soldiers was placed to defend the whole. But how vain it is for man to fight with God! The stone, the seal, the guard, can never keep the Lord of life a prisoner to death; but they all tended exceedingly to confirm the truth of his resurrection. Had these malicious precautions been omitted, we had lost one of the strongest proofs of the event.

The ignorance or the forgetfulness of the disciples respecting his rising again; their cowardice at the time, rendering them totally unfit to venture to steal the body, had they been so disposed; and their incredulity, when first told that he was risen, all unite in strengthening the evidence; but especially the unbelief of Thomas, who for a whole week persisted in refusing to believe any evidence but that of his own senses, which at length was granted.

2. *The number of witnesses* to the fact strongly confirms it. Mary Magdalene was the first. Much was forgiven her, and she loved much; her love was rewarded with this honour. She first saw Jesus, and mistook him for the gardener; but she knew her Shepherd's voice, and owned her Lord, by whose

direction she runs to tell the apostles. Next he appeared to the other Mary, and Salome, when they were flying from the empty tomb, terrified at the sight of the angel. *Jesus met them, saying, All hail!* They held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Peter was then favoured with a sight of his risen Lord. Marvellous kindness to the man who had deserted and denied him! Let it stand as a proof of Christ's regard to penitent backsliders. In the afternoon, on the same day, he joined company with two disciples, walking to a village seven miles from Jerusalem. They knew him not at first: but he talked to them so sweetly, opened the scriptures, and shewed the necessity of the resurrection, that their hearts glowed with holy fire. He condescended also to sup with them. It was then while "he brake the bread and blessed it," in a manner peculiar to himself, that they recollected his person. Fired with love and filled with joy, they sweetly retrace the seven miles back to the city; and eager to publish the glad event, they hasten to the chamber of the apostles, where they relate "what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread."

Immediately "Jesus appears in the midst;"—mild majesty beaming in his placid countenance, and heavenly consolation flowing from his lips:—*Peace be unto you!* When they discovered fear, he added, *Why are you troubled? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.* And when he had spoken thus, he shewed them his hands and his feet: there they saw the certain marks of his sufferings, and his identity was fully proved. Nor did he immediately vanish; he continued with them a considerable time. He showed them, from the scriptures, the necessity of his resurrection; upbraided them with their unbelief; and to put the matter out of all doubt he offered to eat with them; and did actually eat a piece

of a broiled fish, and of an honey-comb. Luke xxiv. 42.

During forty days that followed this event, he met them frequently in different places, instructing them at large "in things pertaining to the kingdom of God." At one of these seasons, Thomas was perfectly convinced, and with profound reverence and adoration, cries, "My Lord, and my God!" He appeared upon another occasion "to above five hundred brethren at once," most of whom were alive when St. Paul recorded it. 1 Cor. xv. 6. Surely, it was impossible that all these witnesses could be deceived; and it is equally impossible they could mean to deceive others, for,

3. *They were credible witnesses*, they were sufficient judges of what they saw and heard, and they could have no temptation to impose upon the world. No temporal advantage could be looked for; but on the contrary all the terrors of persecution, which many of them actually endured; but they lived and died steadfastly witnessing to this fundamental truth.

4. *The very heathen admitted the fact.* Pilate wrote to Tiberius, the Roman Emperor, assuring him that Christ, who was a very extraordinary person, and who had been put to death at Jerusalem, was risen again. And Tiberius proposed to the senate at Rome, that his name should be enrolled among the number of their gods.

5. *The weakness of those who denied the fact*, tend to its confirmation. The soldiers who composed the guard, being affrighted by the earthquake, which happened at the moment of the resurrection, ran into the city to inform their employers what had taken place. Upon which the elders called a council, to consider what must be done, to prevent the belief of Christ's resurrection; when it was determined to bribe the soldiers and put this lie in their mouths:—"Say ye, His disciples came by night and stole him away, *while we slept.* What a palpable contradic-

tion does this excuse contain! If the soldiers were asleep how could they know this? And if they were not asleep, how could the disciples effect it? But they were *not* asleep. It was death to a Roman soldier to sleep on his watch. And who, that considers the cowardice of the disciples at the time, can ever believe that they would venture upon so difficult and hazardous a business? But the priests had the villany to invent the lie, the soldiers had the baseness to propagate it, and the Jews had the folly to believe it; and justly may God give up men to strong delusion to believe a lie," who will not be persuaded, even by miracles, to believe the truth.

Surely these are *infallible* proofs; and we may safely express our certainty of the event, by saying, "The Lord is risen *indeed!*" The important fact being thus ascertained, let us, in the last place, consider the text, as,

III. The language of Joy.

In prospect of this grand event the prophet says, Psalm cxviii. 24, "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will be glad and rejoice therein." The world never saw such a day before. There was joy in Heaven and joy on Earth. "A morning then dawned, which is to be followed by no evening; a brighter sun arose upon the world, which is to set no more; a day began which shall never end; and night and darkness departed, to return not again." "Then were the disciples *glad* when they saw the Lord;" and well they might! They had often seen him with delight, but never so much as now. Christ himself proposes this as an argument of joy: "I am the first and the last; I am he that liveth and was dead; and, behold, *I am alive for evermore!* Amen." Consider we now the causes of their joy.

1. Hereby the truth of his mission was fully confirmed. This is the *Broad Seal* of Heaven affixed to his credentials;" "The sign of Jonas the prophet," to which he referred. "He was declared to be the

Son of God *with power*, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Rom. i. 4. He was publicly demonstrated to be the Son of God, by the immediate power of the Holy Spirit; owned in the face of the world, and freed from all suspicion of being an impostor.

2. The sufficiency and acceptableness of his sacrifice was hereby acknowledged. The apostle truly argues, 1 Cor. xv. 17, If Christ be not risen, we are yet *in our sins*; under the guilt and power of them; condemned for ever, since they could never be taken away but by the sacrifice of Christ; and if he were not risen, there could be no proof that he had taken them away. But, blessed be God, he is risen, that our faith and hope might rise too. *The God of peace* hath brought again from the dead the Great Shepherd of the Sheep; for he was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. When he was discharged from the prison of the grave, God declared in effect, that the ransom price was paid; the full penalty of the law which required death was borne; justice was entirely satisfied, reconciliation was made, and pardon and peace procured through the blood of atonement.

Hence spring the lively hopes of the Christian. Thus Peter sang:—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Thus Paul triumphed:—"Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, *yea, rather that is risen again.*" Rom. viii. 33.

3. The resurrection of Christ is the cause of our spiritual resurrection from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. This is what St. Paul principally designed in that pious wish, "That I may know *the power of his resurrection!*" Phil. iii. 10; to experience that divine power in my soul, quickening

me to a life of grace, which Christ experienced in quickening his dead body in the grave;—and indeed it requires a power no less. None but God can quicken a poor, lifeless, carnal soul, dead in pleasure, dead to God, dead in sin! But virtually, all believers were "quickened together, with Christ:" the whole body was quickened together, the members with the head; and, in due time, by virtue of union with him, and the power of the Spirit in them, they shall be "planted together, both in the likeness of his death and of his resurrection;" that so, as "he died unto sin once, but now liveth unto God," so shall they be "dead indeed unto sin, but alive to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom. vi. 10.

4. The resurrection of Christ is a cause of joy, as it was introductory to his ascension to Heaven, his intercession there, and setting up his new and everlasting kingdom. Immediately after he arose, he said to Mary, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." All this was no less necessary to our complete salvation than his sufferings and death. Because he lives, his people shall live also;—because he intercedes, "he is able to save them to the uttermost;"—because he reigns, they shall be secured;—because he is enthroned, they also shall be glorified. The resurrection necessarily preceeded all these, and therefore, with them, is a cause of joy unspeakable.

5. The resurrection of Christ affords to believers a certain pledge and infallible assurance of their joyful resurrection to eternal life. The one is inseparably connected with the other; they stand or fall together; for, saith St. Paul, "If Christ arose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?—we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. But now is Christ risen, and become *the first fruits* of them

that slept." Jesus Christ arose as a public person; as the forerunner and representative of all his people. He arose as a mighty conqueror over death; and his resurrection was graced with that of many bodies of the saints, who appeared to their friends in Jerusalem, to testify the grand event. Thus, "as by Adam came death, by Jesus Christ came the resurrection of the dead; and, as surely as the first fruits were gathered, so surely shall the whole harvest be safely collected. Of all that were given to Christ, the bodies of his people included, nothing shall be lost; and he has promised to raise them up at the last day, for, "they are the children of the resurrection."

APPLICATION.

And now,—How are our hearts affected by this glorious subject? The first disciples were filled with joy; they congratulated each other, saying, "The Lord is risen indeed!" The fact is now familiar to us, so that the relation may not occasion *wonder;* but are we satisfied as to the *certainty* of it? If it be *not* true, there is no truth in Christianity. If it *be* true, then Christianity is also true. The whole religion of Christ stands on this firm foundation, and is so connected with it, that every part is confirmed together with it. This establishes the whole revelation that he made of God, of Heaven, and of Hell. This ratifies all his doctrines concerning man as a sinner, and himself as a Saviour. It confirms his authority to rule and govern the Church; and it obliges us to believe that he will fulfil all his promises to his people, and all his threatenings to his enemies. And it especially strengthens our faith in the belief of the general resurrection at the last day; for, after *his* resurrection thus evidenced, "Why should it be thought incredible that God should raise the dead? Is any thing too hard for the Lord? All things are possible to Him. He *can* raise the

dead, for he is almighty: and he *will* raise them, for he has promised to do so."

"There shall then be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust." *All men* shall be raised. But O, in what a different manner, and to what different destinations! Hear how Christ himself describes it:—"Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." How important is our present state and conduct! We shall come forth from our graves such as we enter in: and how soon may we enter! What then is our present state? Are we convinced of sin? Humbled for sin? Have we believed in Jesus, and fled for refuge to him? Does our faith work by love so that we *do good?* This is the proper fruit and evidence of faith, and what will be called over at the judgment-day. O that then we may be "found in Christ, justified by his righteousness! while our faith in that righteousness is justified by its good and holy fruits!

The Lord is risen! Blessed and delightful truth! The Lord is risen, indeed! Then we may say with Job, "I know that my Redeemer liveth;" and, because he liveth, I shall live also. He is the resurrection and the life. Believing in him, though I were dead, yet shall I live; and now, living and believing in him, I shall *never* die. John xi. 26. What have I to fear? God is reconciled; he is the God of peace, who raised up Jesus from the dead. Justice is satisfied; for the debt is discharged, and the prisoner released. If any accusation is made, I have "the answer of a good conscience, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead;" for "who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather, that is risen again."

And if we are thus "risen with Christ, through the faith of the operation of God," let us "seek

those things which are above: let us set our affections on things above, not on things on the earth." Are we united to Christ? He is in Heaven preparing places for us; let us follow him in the affections and desires of our hearts. This world is not our rest and portion:—"We are dead" to it, by profession and obligation; "and our life is hid with Christ in God." The life of grace is a secret life, of which Christ is the author and the keeper; and, "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory."—When he who began, who supports, and will complete this spiritual life in us, shall appear as the Judge of the world in all his glory, then shall our mortal bodies be quickened by his Spirit which dwelleth in us, and resemble his own glorious body; then shall the creature itself (the animal frame) be delivered from the bondage of corruption, and be introduced into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. "So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

"With joy, like Christ's, shall every saint
His empty tomb survey;
Then rise, with his ascending Lord,
To realms of endless day."

SERMON XLVII.

ACTS II. 4.

And they were filled with the Holy Ghost.

AMONG the ancient predictions of gospel-times and gospel-blessings, the prophecy of Joel is none of the least:—"It shall come to pass in the last days," saith God, "*I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh*," &c. St. Peter, under the immediate influences of that Spirit, assures us in this chapter, verse 16, that the promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost:—"This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." John the Baptist, the harbinger of Christ, had also said to his disciples, "I indeed baptize you with *water*; but he shall baptize you with *the Holy Ghost* and with *fire*." Our Lord himself comforted his disciples with a fresh promise of this great blessing; "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of truth; who shall teach you all things; who shall be in you, and abide with you for ever." John xiv. 16, 17, 26. Our risen Saviour, when just about to ascend up to glory, renewed the promise, assuring them it should be fulfilled in a few days, and commanded them to abide in Jerusalem till it was accomplished. In dependence upon his word, and expectation of the blessing, "they all continued, with one accord, in prayer and supplication."

The joyful day arrived—it was the *Lord's Day*: it was also the day of *Pentecost*: a day observed by the Jews, in memory of giving the law at Mount Sinai about 1500 years before. On this day they

presented the first fruits of their harvest to God. How highly was this day honoured! A new sanction was given to the observation of the first day in the week as the Christian Sabbath; the law of faith was first published from Mount Sion; and the first fruits of a glorious harvest of saved sinners were presented to God: and thus our Lord who had been crucified at the Passover-feast, fifty days before, was glorified at the Feast of Weeks; upon both which occasions, there was a vast assemblage of people at Jerusalem. "The day of Pentecost was fully come." The disciples, obedient to their master's order, were assembled together, with unanimous affection, in the same place; waiting for the promised Comforter; when "suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind; and it filled all the house where they were sitting." This was not only to engage their attention, but to serve as an emblem of the powerful influences of the Holy Spirit on the minds of men; for by the energy of his sacred operations the whole world was to be shaken. Our Lord had made use of the emblem of wind, or air in regeneration:—"The wind bloweth where it listeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." As the wind or air is the food of natural life, so is the Holy Spirit the beginner and supporter of spiritual life. Thus Jesus after his resurrection, "*breathed* upon the apostles, saying, Receive ye the Holy Ghost." John xx. 22. Perhaps he alluded to the creation of man at first, when "the Lord God breathed into his nostrils *the breath of life* (or lives) and man became a living soul." Gen. ii. 7. As the *vital air* is necessary to our existence in the body, so the Spirit of God is necessary to our spiritual existence, or living to God. There was a striking emblem of the same kind in the parable of the dry bones, Ezek. xxxvii. When Ezekiel, according to God's command, prophesied to them, "*there was a noise*, and a shaking; the bones came together; the flesh came upon them, and

the skin covered them; but there was *no breath* in them:"—then the Lord said, Prophesy to the wind, and say, "Come from the four winds, O breath of the Lord, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." This parable, or vision, fitly represents, not only the political state of the Jews and their recovery, but also the deplorable condition of men, dead in trespasses and in sins, and their revival to spiritual life, by the word and Spirit of Christ; and it shows there may be a lifeless form of godliness, but that the power and life is from the Holy Ghost; "for if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." This great truth seems to have been intimated by "the mighty rushing wind."

Another very remarkable sign accompanied the descent of the Spirit on the disciples:—"There appeared unto them *cloven tongues, like as of fire,* and it sat upon each of them:"—a bright appearance over the head of each, resembling a tongue, terminating in several points,—a very suitable emblem of the "gift of tongues," which was then granted to them; for, at that moment, "they were filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with *other tongues* as the Spirit gave them utterance." The intention of this miracle was to enable them at once to speak the language of every country to which they might be sent to preach the gospel; and this ability was attained, not in the ordinary and slow way of learning a foreign tongue, as we do, but in a moment, as an attestation to the truth of the gospel. The dividing of tongues at Babel proved the unhappy means of losing the true knowledge of the true God; but by this new division of tongues the knowledge of God in Christ was restored, and readily communicated to men of every nation. A specimen of this was immediately afforded; for, as this happened at the time of a great festival, there were then in Jerusalem devout Jews, who did not usually reside there, but *sojourned* there, having visited the temple from all parts of the known world; and when upon

the report of what had happened, the multitude were gathered together, they were quite confounded and amazed; for every one of this various assembly heard one or other of the apostles or disciples, as they addressed themselves by turns to people of a different language, speaking to them in his own proper dialect. And they were all amazed at this wonderful event, knowing that the speakers were all Galileans: yet did they, who, before knew no language than their own, speak to this mixed assembly in a great variety of tongues.

This was a wonderful testimony to the truth of the gospel which they preached; and it was intended to put an honour upon preaching the word; it is the appointment of God for the conversion of sinners; it is "the power of God to salvation;" and therefore the first miracle, after the Spirit was given, was to enable his servants to preach it.

The tongues were of *fire*. Thus the prophecy was fulfilled:—"He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with *fire*." And does not this emblem denote the *illuminating* and *animating* nature of divine truth?—When the gospel is attended with the power of the Spirit, it both *enlightens* and *warms* the heart. Gospel truths are not cold speculations; they afford both light and heat; they purify the mind, purge away the dross of sensuality, and make the soul mount heaven-ward. Thus the hearts of the two disciples "burnt within them" when Jesus walked with them, and opened the scriptures. Come, O thou celestial flame, come and sit upon *us* also! enlighten *our* darkness, purify our affections, consume our corruptions, and fill us with thyself!

And do not these *tongues of fire* speak a lesson to all the *ministers* of the gospel? Do they not intimate the manner in which they ought to speak the truth? Not with cold indifference, or frozen formality; but, like John, who was "a burning and a shining light," with fervency of spirit and vigour of affection; as men in earnest, believing and feeling what they

speak, anxious for the glory of Christ, and eager to win souls.

What was the *subject* which first engaged the heaven-taught tongues of the disciples? *The wonderful works of God.* "We do hear them speak in our own tongues the wonderful works of God,"—the great things of God,—the magnificent, stupendous things of God. And what were they? Surely, they were those "things of Christ," which the Spirit was given to show them, that they might glorify him; the person, miracles, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, together with this effusion of the Spirit: in a word, the glorious salvation of the Son of God; and these will always be the favourite topics of those ministers whose tongues are touched with the flame of the altar.

The multitude who witnessed this remarkable scene were all involved in amazement and perplexity, and said one to another, What can this mean? The pious and devout were thus affected; but their minds were prepared to listen to the voice of God, as soon as they were convinced it was his. Others, probably the native Jews, who understood none of these foreign languages, and heard only unintelligible sounds, derided them, ascribing their preaching to intoxication. "These men," said they, "are full of new wine."—Let us not wonder if, in our day, the preaching of the gospel is treated in the same manner. There always have been mockers to whom the gospel of Christ has been foolishness. The Lord pity and pardon them!

Then Peter, full of the Holy Ghost, standing up with the eleven apostles, lifted up his voice, and addressed the multitude. He begged them to have so much candour, as not rashly to conclude them to be men overcome with liquor, especially by nine o'clock in the morning; an hour in which it should seem, no Jew was ever known to be drunk. But he directs their attention to a well-known passage of Scripture, a prophecy of Joel, in which the Lord

says, "It shall come to pass in the last days, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants, and on my handmaidens, I will pour out in those days my Spirit, and they shall prophesy: and it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." The apostle declares this prophecy to be then fulfilling; and proceeds to show them that Jesus of Nazareth, whom God approved among them, by many miracles, and whom they had lately crucified, was the true Messiah, the Son of God; and that, while they gratified their own wicked passions in putting him to death, they had fulfilled the divine decrees concerning him; but that all their malice had been in vain, for God had raised him up, according to the prophecies of David. Peter declares himself and his brethren witnesses of his resurrection from the dead; and affirms, that his divine Master, having ascended to heaven, had sent down on that day the promised Spirit, whose operations on his disciples they now beheld.

The design of this sermon was to convince them of sin, which is the first work of the Holy Spirit, and the Lord crowned it with vast success. Multitudes were pierced to the heart with a sense of their guilt; and especially with the guilt incurred by the murder of Christ; and, filled with terror and perplexity, they applied to the apostles for advice, saying, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Then Peter, agreeably to the Lord's directions, "preached repentance and remission of sins in his name, beginning at Jerusalem."—Here is a fine specimen of gospel-preaching:—he exhorts the vilest sinners to repent; encouraging them thereto by the hope of the full pardon of all their sins, upon believing in Jesus; "and, with many other words, did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation."

Wonderful was the success of this day;—three thousand souls converted to God at once! Most of them, probably, bigoted Jews, ignorantly attached to the law of Moses, and bitter enemies of Jesus Christ.—Many of them, perhaps, had cried "Crucify him, crucify him!" and had said, "His blood be upon us, and upon our children." Surprising grace!—what mercy, what power, was that day displayed! What cannot God do! Three thousand *converted!* not merely alarmed, but changed in heart! Their sincerity was manifest; they sacrificed all their worldly interest to Christ; the pardon of sin filled their hearts with gladness; they were all love and liberality; and they continued steadfast in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer; praising God, and having favour with all the people.

Glorious confirmation this of the truth of the Gospel! Delightful encouragement to the preachers of it! Charming specimen of its happy effects, and blessed first fruits of an extensive harvest! O for another outpouring of the blessed Spirit upon the churches! Such, we expect, in fulfilment of many precious promises. In the mean time, may we be the happy subjects and witnesses of the ordinary work of the Spirit in the conversion of sinners, and in the edification of the saints! And this *stated work* of the Holy Spirit is what we shall now, in the second place, consider.

We have taken a brief view of the glorious events which took place on the day of Pentecost. We have seen the apostles, and probably the rest of the hundred and twenty disciples, endued with the gift of tongues. This gift, together with the power of healing diseases, casting out devils, with many other miraculous works, was long continued in the church; perhaps above a hundred years. These are generally called the *extraordinary* gifts

of the Spirit. These have long since ceased. When Christianity was established, there was no longer occasion for them. But have *all* the operations of the Spirit ceased? Some say so: but we deny it. We allow that the *extraordinary* powers just mentioned are withdrawn; but we affirm, and think it an affirmation of the first importance, that the *gracious influences* of the Holy Spirit on the minds of believers are still continued; and that there is no true vital religion without them.

The *extraordinary gifts* at first possessed by Christians did not, necessarily, imply those *gracious influences* for which we plead. It is probable, that some had the former, who were destitute of the latter; for St. Paul, 1 Cor. xiii. 1. &c. seems to intimate, that a person might speak with various tongues, have the gift of prophecy, understand all mysteries, and work miracles, and yet not have *love*:—an eminent "fruit of the Spirit;" from which we conclude, that the ordinary and gracious operations of the Spirit upon the souls of men may be continued, although his miraculous gifts are withdrawn; and we shall prove that the former are promised to be continued in the church, and that they are now as necessary to make men Christians as they were in the Apostles' days.

When our Lord promised to send his Holy Spirit to his disciples, he assured them that he should *abide with them* FOR EVER. John xiv. 16. He was to *abide*, to continue with them, not for three or four years, as our Lord had done, but *for ever;* and as this presence of the Comforter was to supply the place of Christ on earth, we may safely conclude, that the promise extended not to the apostles only, but (like his intercession, John xvii. 20.) "to them also who should believe on him, through their word, even unto the end of the world."

The Holy Spirit is promised (John vii. 33.) as the common privilege of all believers:—"He that believeth in me, out of his belly (or heart) shall flow

rivers of living waters. This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive." This promise is not confined to believers of the first century, or to the age of miracles; it is as much a promise to believers at large, as any other in the New Testament. A similar promise is made in John iv. 14.

The Holy Spirit is said to *dwell* in believers. 1 Cor. iii. 16, and vi. 19: "The Spirit of God dwelleth in you;" "your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost." This is spoken to the whole body of Corinthian Christians, without a single hint that the blessing was intended to be confined to them or the Christians of that age only. Were we to admit that expressions of this kind respecting the Spirit must be confined to the first believers, we should be obliged to admit the same restriction as to all the privileges, tempers and duties of Christians in general. And indeed, those who deny the work of the Spirit do generally give up all the essentials of the Gospel, and leave us nothing but a system of mere morality,—a refined heathenism, graced with the name of Christ. And we may seriously "advise persons to be cautious of confining the Spirit to primitive times, lest they confine Heaven to primitive times, and so miss of it themselves; for indeed there is no going to Heaven without receiving the Holy Spirit."

This will appear still more clearly, if we consider *for what purposes* he is given to the church; we shall then see that there is always the same occasion for his gracious influences as there was at first.

The whole dispensation of the Gospel is called *The ministration of the Spirit*, 2 Cor. iii. 8. The whole business of gospel-salvation, from first to last, is in the hands of the Spirit. Not only at first, but in all ages, he calls, qualifies, and assists the ministers of the gospel in preaching it; and all its efficacy in the world is from the power of his grace.

Illumination is his work. No truth of the gos-

pel is rightly understood but by his teaching. He was promised as "the Spirit of *Truth*," who was to "glorify Christ," by "showing the things of Christ" to men. This is fully proved by those words of St. Paul, I Cor. ii. 14:—"the natural man (that is, every man by nature) receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; *neither can he know them*, because they are spiritually discerned:" that is, they are known only by the teaching of the Spirit in the use of the word. Now, as all real Christians are illuminated and taught of God, it is evidently necessary that they should all have the Spirit; and if the Spirit be not given, then no man in the world knows, or can know, the things of God.

Again: All real Christians are *praying persons;* but no man knows "how to pray nor what to pray for," without his assistance: and therefore it is mentioned, Rom. viii. 26, as the common privilege of all believers, that "the Spirit itself helpeth our infirmities" in this duty; which shows that all Christians in all ages need the influence of the Spirit.

Our Saviour, in his discourse with Nicodemus (John iii. 3.) strongly insisted on the necessity of *regeneration*, or the new birth; solemnly declaring, that "unless a man be born again, or born of the Spirit, he could not be saved." This then shows that every Christian must needs have the Spirit; for he is the author of that inward change, without which no man is inwardly a Christian.

Sanctification is also the privilege of all true believers; they are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through *sanctification of the Spirit*." 1 Peter ii. 2. No man can be saved who is not sanctified; and no man can be sanctified but by the Spirit.

The Holy Ghost was promised "to convince of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment;" but will any person say it is less necessary now to be con-

vinced of sin, &c. than at first? Can there be any repentance without it? Certainly not: and if not, then the Spirit is as necessary as ever.

He is also called the *Spirit of Faith.*—He is the *Comforter*, the *Seal*, the *Witness*, the *First Fruits* of Heaven. No man, then, can have faith in Christ, spiritual joy and comfort, nor any evidence for Heaven, unless he have the Holy Spirit. This might be more abundantly proved from a great number of texts and arguments; but the narrow limits of a short sermon forbid.*

APPLICATION.

Have ye received the Holy Ghost? said St. Paul to some early disciples.—We ask the same question. Have *ye* received the Holy Ghost? We have proved the necessity of his sacred influences;—do we know any thing of them by experience? Remember what the Scripture says, (Rom. viii. 9) "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." And how awful must their portion be who are not his! The whole world is under the dominion either of the good Spirit of God, or that evil Spirit "who worketh in the hearts of all the children of disobedience." It is therefore of the greatest importance for us to consider under whose influence we act. "If we sow to the flesh, we shall reap corruption; if we sow to the Spirit, we shall of the Spirit reap eternal life." By our fruits are we known. "The fruits of the Spirit are love, and joy, and peace, and goodness, and meekness, and temperance." "The works of the flesh are adultery, fornication, hatred, drunkenness, &c. and they who do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God." What does our conduct say? O conscience be faithful, give a true verdict!

* The necessity of Divine Influences is displayed in a very pleasing manner, by Mr. T. Williams, in his book called "An Historic Defence of Experimental Religion, as supported by the authority of Scripture, and the experience of the wisest and best men in all ages," &c—(See New Ed. 12mo, 7s.)

Does it appear that you are a stranger to his grace, in enlightening the mind, renewing the will, convincing of sin, leading the soul to Christ, and sanctifying the whole man? Know, then, that your state is deplorable and dangerous:—may you be sensible of it; and if you are, you will earnestly pray to God to give you his Spirit, which he has promised to them that ask him.

To those who know the Lord, the effusion of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost will appear exceedingly glorious. Such persons will rejoice to think that his gracious influence is still continued in the church: above all, they will be continually desirous to experience it. All the light, love, peace, joy, and consolation to be found in the religion of Jesus, spring from his constant operations. Honour then this blessed Spirit, by seeking his daily assistance. When you pray, read, hear, or perform any spiritual action, seek his help. Thus shall you "be filled with all joy and peace in believing;" thus shall the love of God be shed abroad in your hearts; thus shall you "abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost;" and having this experience, you possess "the seal of God and the earnest" of Heaven; "for he that hath wrought for us the self same thing is God, who hath also given us of his Spirit." This is the grand evidence of our being Christians indeed; and "hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given of his Spirit."

To the blessed Spirit of all grace,—to Jesus Christ the only Saviour,—and to the Father of mercies, the one covenant God of our salvation, be glory in all the churches, world without end. Amen.

"Let thy kind Spirit in my heart
For ever dwell, O God of Love!
And light and heavenly peace impart,
Sweet earnest of the joys above!"

SERMON XLVIII.

ACTS x. 38.

——*Who went about doing good.*

BY THE REV. SAMUEL GREATHEED.*

THE apostle Peter said this of our Lord Jesus Christ. The occasion of his saying it shews us that the Spirit of God works upon the minds of men, and inclines them to serve him, even before they know how to serve him in a right manner. In this case they are very glad and thankful to be taught the will of God. Do *you*, brethren, wish to know how you may please God, and become "wise to salvation?" If we did not wish to do you *good*, we should not come to you. The Lord is altogether good, and is always doing good. We may surely hope he will do us good *now*, if we are truly desirous of knowing his will.

We find, from this chapter, that the words of the text were spoken by Peter to Cornelius, who was an officer in the Roman army, and had been brought up a heathen and an idolater. He was quartered among the Jews; who were the only nation at that time that

* This discourse was composed by Mr. Greatheed, solely for the use of some persons who visited the villages near Newport-Pagnell, Bucks, and who read written or printed sermons to the people, and before the publication of the first volume of Village Sermons; consequently without any intention of its publication for the press. But it appears in this volume by the particular desire of Mr. Burder, who wishes it to stand as a token of his unfeigned respect for the Author, and a memorial of their mutual friendship.

knew there is only *one* God, who is eternal and holy. Cornelius learned from them this doctrine, which is the ground of all true religion; and he prayed to God, as every body should do who believes there is a God. If *you* do not pray to God, you are worse than the heathens; for they do not know there is a God to pray to. Besides this, we are told that Cornelius feared God with all his house. Do *you* try to lead your families and friends to know and serve God? If not you see that, instead of being true Christians, you come far short of what Cornelius did, before he ever heard the Gospel of Christ.

They who do not pray to God are without excuse, because God assures us, in his word, that he hears and answers prayer. The history of Cornelius gives a proof of it. The apostle Peter was preaching the Gospel at a place about forty miles distant from the town where Cornelius lived. The Lord informed Cornelius of this, and told him to send for Peter to come and instruct him. Peter accordingly came, and preached Jesus Christ to all who had met on the occasion; showing them how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with power: *who went about doing good.* He told them also much more about Jesus Christ; and, indeed, if he had not preached about Christ, he need not have come there. "Christ is the Way, the Truth and the life;" by whom alone a sinner can find mercy with God. Wherever the apostles went they preached Christ. This is one mark by which we may know who they are that preach most like the apostles. If you hear little or nothing about Christ, you are likely to get little or no good.

The apostle Peter informed Cornelius and his family, that the doctrine he had to deliver was the same which they must have heard of, as it had been published throughout all the neighbouring country of Judea: and had, indeed, been first preached in Galilee, the country where they then were. You, perhaps, may think it strange that Cornelius had not

enquired about it sooner; but the reason probably was, that Christianity was then every where spoken against; the apostles and disciples of Christ were suspected, even by their own countrymen, the Jews, to be either mad or wicked men, because they worshipped God in a way different from that which was established by law; and because they continued preaching Christ to their neighbours, when it was opposed and forbidden by the great people and rulers. If you read the book of the Acts, you will see this was the case; and you will not be surprised at it, if you consider that Jesus Christ himself was *crucified* (which is like being hanged in our country;) for both the rulers and the mob accused him of the vilest crimes. But the prejudices of Cornelius were now removed, and it was an excellent disposition which he discovered, when he said to the apostle "Now therefore, we are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God."—May the Lord give us *now* the same disposition!

One thing which Peter told Cornelius concerning Jesus Christ, was, that "he went about doing good." If Cornelius had heard any thing of Christ before, it might be that he went about doing *harm*. Christ had been charged by the Jews with treason and blasphemy. He had been tried, condemned, and executed as a malefactor. Cornelius was likely, from the common report, to have a very bad opinion of Christ. He determined, however, to hear all that Peter had to say in behalf of Christ; and then to judge for himself. Let us all be careful how we take matters upon *hearsay*, espiecially about religion and religious people.

Peter convinced Cornelius that Jesus Christ went about doing *good*. So far as you know the history of Christ, you are doubtless convinced that he did not go about to hurt people, but to do them good. Even those ignorant and foolish persons who deny that Christ was sent from Heaven, own that he did

good in some respects. But what we should desire to know is, Whether he *can* and *will*, do *us* good? If we do not obtain good from Christ in this life, and in that to come, we might as well never have heard of him.

As to the *power* of Chrift to do *us* good, we have reason to trust in it, from the wonderful power he had to do good to all, as long as he was upon earth. His works were such as no man ever did before nor since. He satisfied the hunger of many thousands of people with a very few small loaves and fishes. By merely touching or even speaking to weak and sick persons, he cured them of the most desperate diseases. He raised up several people from death to life; one man who had been buried some days, was restored to his afflicted relations. In that age of the world, when God was so little known, the Devil was worshipped by many; and he was permitted to torment the bodies of mankind in a shocking manner; but no wicked spirit could keep possession of any person who was brought to Christ for relief:—one word from him was enough to restore any one to perfect health and reason. The power of Christ was also shown in preserving his disciples in a dreadful storm at sea. He said to the wind and the waves "Be still;" and they became perfectly calm in a moment! But it is not possible now to tell you a hundredth part of the proofs that Jesus gave of his power to do good to those around him. The four Gospels are full of such accounts, yet, at the close of the last, St. John says, "There were also many other things which Jesus did; the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the Books that should be written." People in general are fond of reading and hearing wonderful things. Now, there is no true history, nor scarcely any story, that contains things so wonderful, as those which Jesus did for the good of mankind. Yet they are all certainly true, for they were written by four different

persons who saw what they relate: who were honest and good men: who did good like their Master, and suffered themselves to be put to death rather than deny what they knew to be true, or keep silence about it. You would do well, as often as you can, to take up your Bibles, and read the history of Jesus Christ; and also consider, whenever you read it, what was his reason for doing good in such surprising ways. Why was the history of his actions written over and over again, and handed down to us so many hundred years after? The whole must surely be meant for *our* good. It would be tantalizing you to tell you of his doing so much good to others, if *you* could get no good from him. You suffer pains and wants; your relations and neighbours are afflicted; if Christ was now upon earth, he might do them the same good he formerly did others. But if you read the Scriptures with care, you may see that Jesus took more pains to *teach* people than to heal them. He performed all those miracles to gain their attention, and their belief of what he taught. His doctrine could do them much greater good than the healing of their diseases. If you could be certain that God forgave all your sins, and would give you eternal life, would you not think it a greater benefit than merely to be cured of a bodily complaint? The doctrine of Christ was, That "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And, accordingly, he healed one man of the palsy, on purpose to show he could forgive his sins. When the poor creature was brought to our Lord, his first words to him were, "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee." Some who were present murmured at his pretending to forgive sins; but he soon silensed them. "That ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins," said he, turning to the poor man, "I say unto thee, Arise, take up thy bed and go to thine house." And immediately he arose, took

up his bed, and went forth before them all. See the second chapter of St. Mark.

Now, brethren, what think ye of the power of Christ to do good? Nothing could be more true or just than the principle upon which the Jews reasoned among themselves:—"Who can forgive sins but God only?" But you see our Lord Jesus Christ *did* forgive sins, and proved his power to do so by working a miracle. It is plain, therefore, that Jesus Christ is God. All of you have probably been told so from your infancy; but now you see it cannot be otherwise. On this account, the Scriptures call him *Immanuel*, which signifies "*God with us*:" they also call him *the Son of God*, having the same nature with his Father," and they declare that "all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father; for He and the Father are one:" they also call him "the Word of God," and then say "the Word was God."

Now, as our Lord Jesus Christ is "God over all blessed for evermore," his power to do good must be boundless, and always the same. You have seen that he worketh a miracle, to prove that, whilst on earth, he had power to forgive sins: and surely, now he is exalted to Heaven, he must have the same power. If, whilst he was on earth, in the form of a servant, he had this power, you cannot reasonably doubt that, now he reigns in Heaven, King of the World, "he is able even to save to the uttermost all who come to God by him."

And do you not all *need* his pardoning mercy? Have you not transgressed his holy law? Remember it is written, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in *all* things commanded in the book of the law to do them." Gal. iii. 10. If you have obeyed it in *some* respects, or even in *most* things, this will not excuse you for having disobeyed or neglected it in others. The law of God admits of no composition; and makes no allowance for any failure whatever. The apostle James assures us (chap ii. ver. 10.) that

"whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in *one* point, he is guilty of all."—And the reason which he gives for this is, that it is the same authority which enforces each of the commandments; so that whoever disobeys any one of them, tramples upon all the authority of God. Instead, therefore, of enquiring who can forgive sins *but* God, it might be asked, How can God himself forgive sins committed against that law, which he himself hath given to mankind for the rule of their conduct, and by which he has appointed that men should be judged? This question must for ever have perplexed a convicted sinner, if the gospel had not told us that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;" for "God made him to be a sin-offering for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." 2 Cor. v. 19, 21. On this ground there is encouragement to hope for pardon. "There is forgiveness with God, that he may be feared." Yea, "it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." So that, if any of you had been distressed and terrified on account of your sins, you see it is not right for you to *despair* of forgiveness.—Christ was crucified, that he might bear the punishment due to your sins; and, after being buried, he performed the greatest miracle of all, in raising up his own body by his own power from the grave, in order that he might prove he had fully discharged the debt which sinners had incurred. He afterwards ascended up to Heaven; and in some of his last words to his disciples, said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned." Mark xvi. 15, 16.—We are all under condemnation; for all have sinned. No obedience that we can pay in future to the law of God, can make amends for past sins: but Christ has power to forgive them; "for by grace are ye

saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God."

When a certain person came to Christ on earth, he seemed to doubt his power to help, saying, "If thou *canst* do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us." Jesus said unto him, "If thou canst *believe*, all things are possible to him that believeth." "Lord," answered the poor man with tears, "I believe; help thou my unbelief;" So, under your fears about the possibility of your sins being forgiven, go to Jesus by prayer; plead that he has said, "He that believeth shall be saved," and cry, "Lord, I believe; help *thou* mine unbelief."

I hope you are now satisfied as to the *power of* Jesus to do you good. If so, it should be your chief concern to know whether he is WILLING *also to do you good*, and *all* the good that you need. May the Spirit of Christ make you as earnest on this point as reasonable creatures, with the word of God before them, ought to be! What would it profit you if you could gain the whole world, and should lose your own soul? You think, perhaps but little of this *now*: but you are near the hour of death; you don't know *how* near; and if you have your reason then, you will wonder how you could have been so stupid through your lives, as not to be concerned, above all things, to know whether Christ was willing to save your souls. It may *then* be too late, and you would, in vain, give the whole world for a few minutes' time, like those which we yet have to spend together. But "NOW," I have to declare to you from the Scriptures, "*now* is the accepted time; *now* is the day of salvation!" "O seek the Lord while he may be found! call upon him while he is near!"

You have heard that Jesus Christ is the ever-blessed God: be assured then, from the gracious character in which God has revealed himself in his word, that he will not despise any soul that is truly humbled and contrite on account of his sin. "The

tender mercy of God is over all his works." You see every day what compassion he shows to the evil and unthankful. His rain descends, and his sun-beams shine on the land of the wicked as well as on that of the good. And has he less compassion on your *souls* than on your bodies? By no means. He desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live. "Turn ye," said the Lord to the rebellious house of Israel, "turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" How long already has God delayed avenging himself upon us for our sins? Why? "Not that he is slack concerning his promise, but that he is long-suffering to us-ward; not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance:" for, "except we repent, we must all perish;" but a godly sorrow works repentance unto salvation.

You have heard that "*God was manifest in the flesh*," in the person of Jesus Christ. Astonishing as it is, it is certain that he took upon him the form of a servant, suffered infirmity, want, contempt, persecution, and a shameful miserable death. So wonderful an event must answer some good purpose. The prophecies of the Old Testament concur with the sayings of our Lord himself, and his apostles, in the New Testament, to teach us what was the design of the sufferings and death of Christ. "He bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows; was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes are we healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all." Isa. iii. 4, 6. "I am the good Shepherd," said Jesus; "I lay down my life for the sheep. They shall never perish; but I give unto them eternal life." John x. "Whom God hath sent forth," says the apostle Paul, "to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past,

through the forbearance of God, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." Rom. iii. 25, 26. And can any one believe that Jesus humbled himself as a man, and suffered as if he had been a malefactor, for the sole purpose of *saving sinners*, and yet suspect that he will *refuse salvation* to those that seek it from him? It was for "the joy of saving sinners that he endured the cross, disregarding the shame." Well may it then be said, that "there is joy in heaven over every sinner that repenteth." May you now believe in Christ, that he may "see of the travail of his soul" in your salvation, "and be satisfied!"

Consider what is said in the text, "He *went about* doing good." He not only never rejected one request for help of all the numberless persons who applied to him, but he went about, in order to "seek and to save that which was lost." He travelled for this purpose on foot, with much weariness and faintness, from one end of the land of Canaan to the other, again and again. He compares himself to a shepherd, who seeks far and wide for a poor wandering sheep, that never could have found its way back to the fold. So his willingness to do good to sinners is still proved by his command to those who are intrusted with the Gospel, that they should preach it to all mankind by his providence, in sending his disciples throughout the world; without which the Gospel would to this day have been unknown in England; and by the influence of his Spirit upon the hearts of all them who are made willing in the day of his power, to lay hold on the hope set before them; for what but the sovereign grace of God makes any of *you*, who long for his salvation, to differ from the rest, who reject it to their everlasting destruction? If *we* feel any love to God, it is "because he first loved us:" and he hath said, "all that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out."

Brethren, the Scriptures inform us, that besides

the two great purposes for which, as we have observed, Christ came into this world, there was a *third.* He came, not only to declare to us the will of God, and to offer himself up for the pardon of our sins,—but also "To leave us an EXAMPLE, that we might walk in his steps." "He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." We are unworthy to be called *Christians* if we do not *imitate* him. Let us set his bright and blessed example before us, as the text holds forth. Let us do all the *good* we can to those around us, both to their bodies and their souls; yea, even to "our enemies, persecutors, and slanderers;" but especially to our relations and friends, and to those who serve God. Let us remember Christ's labour and patience in *going about* to do good to those who either could not, or would not come to him to receive it. *We* are humbly trying to follow our Lord Jesus Christ, in coming *here* to do you good. Our consciences bear us witness that we earnestly desire your welfare, and have no other end in view. We know nothing that can do you *greater* good than to lead you to think more of God and eternity, and to promote in you the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ. We hope that God is visiting you by our means, and that he will, by his Spirit, make this meeting useful to your souls.

If we remain strangers and enemies to God, it is not for want of the power or willingness of Christ to do you good. Do not forget what has been said to you on this subject. "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present yourselves living sacrifices to him, holy and acceptable, which is your reasonable service." If you do *not,* every mercy you have received, and the very means of instruction you have now had, must appear against you at the day of judgment.

But, if your hearts are now seriously affected with what you have heard: if you feel yourselves to be guilty and helpless creatures; if you earnestly

desire the pardon of your sins, through the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to have your minds renewed, and made like the mind that was in him, —these things should encourage you to pray to Christ, to depend upon his grace, and to rejoice in the fulness of his salvation. We shall be extremely glad to find that this is the case with many among you; for we know that "he who begins a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Christ."

"Now to Him who is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy; to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever." *Amen.*

SERMON XLIX.

PHIL. II. 5.

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.

WHOEVER takes a view of Christianity, as displayed in the precepts and example of Christ, its great Founder, must acknowledge it to be a very lovely religion! admirably calculated to promote the happiness of man in the present world, as well as to secure his eternal salvation in the next.

"It is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners"—to save them "from their sins:"—not only to deliver them from the wrath to come, which is the wages of sin, but also to restore in them the holy image of God, which they had lost by their fall in Adam. He came, not only to restrain the practice of sin, but to purify the fountain of the heart, from whence the streams of sinful practice proceed.

To effect these great designs, he became a sacrifice for sin; he was made sin for us; he died for our sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. He procured for us, and sent down to us, the Holy Spirit, the great sanctifier of the church. And having given to the world the purest precepts that were ever delivered, he gave infinite force to them by a perfect example of purity, in his own temper and walk, and has left us this example for our imitation.

All true Christians are followers of Christ; they must walk even as he walked; and, in order to this,

they must possess the same holy temper; or, as it is expressed in the text, "the same mind" must be in them which was in Christ Jesus. This mind, or disposition, is the subject of the present discourse. May the good Spirit of God explain it to us, and produce it in us!

We might express the whole in a single word. LOVE is the mind of Christ; for "God is love." The whole law is fulfilled in love: love to God, and love to man. This filled the heart of the great Redeemer, actuated him in the whole of his obedience and sufferings, supported him under them, and rendered them acceptable, meritorious, and efficacious to the salvation of the church. This is the mind that was in Christ; this his prevailing disposition; and the principal part of our holiness consists in being like him, and living under the daily influence of love to God and love to man. But it is necessary to be more particular, and to consider the Christian temper in its several branches. We begin with,

1. HUMILITY. This deserves the first place, both because it is that grace in Christ to which the text refers, and because it is, in every believer, the *root* of all other graces. Wonderful indeed was the humility of the Son of God, "who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross!" Behold here the greatest example of humility that the world ever saw or ever will see! and this example is proposed to our imitation. And what argument can be so forcible? for shall the glorious Saviour be humble, and the miserable sinner be proud? How preposterous! How absurd!

Pride is natural to apostate man. It was a principal ingredient in the sin of Adam; and every child of his is born proud. Adam got it from the Devil;

and we get it from Adam. And yet, it is truly said, 'Pride was not made for man;" it ill-becomes him; for a *sinner* to be proud, is the most monstrous thing in the world. Nothing is so hateful to God; and, if we are born of God, nothing will be so hateful to us. Now Faith lays the axe at the root of pride. Faith beholds the majesty and holiness of God; and shrinks, as it were, into nothing before him. The proud man swells by comparing himself with other sinners; but the Christian compares himself, his conduct, and then his heart, with the most pure, holy, spiritual law of God: this prevents self-righteous boasting, and shows that even his best duties are tinged with sin. He was "alive without the law once; but now the commandment is come, sin revives, and he dies." This experience will force him to the cross; he will gladly renounce his own works and righteousness, and supremely desire to be "found in Christ."

Let but the Christian think of three things, and it will promote his humility:—*what he was,—what he is,—and what he shall be.* He *was* a poor, blind, naked, filthy rebel; an enemy to God, and an heir of Hell. He *is*, by grace, a pardoned sinner, and an adopted child; but, O! what imperfection in all his graces! what defects in all his duties! what strength in his corruptions; what a disproportion between his obligations and his returns to God! between his professions and his practice! between his privileges and his enjoyments! So that he can cordially unite with a better man than himself in saying, "I am the chief of sinners," and less than the least of all saints." Let him also consider *what he shall be*:—He shall be "with Christ;" he shall be "like Christ;" he shall wear a crown of glory; he shall possess a heavenly inheritance; he shall be a king and a priest to God. Amazing prospects! Animating, yet humbling hopes! He will then, with David, sit down and say, "Who am I, O Lord God, that thou hast brought me hitherto! and, as

if this were a small thing in thy sight, thou hast spoken of thy servant's house for a great while yet to come! and, is this the manner of men, O Lord! and what more can David say unto thee?"

2. PIETY, or, "the fear of God," or "godliness," was an eminent branch of the mind that was in the man Christ Jesus. These terms are nearly of the same import, and denote the habitual, prevailing frame of the mind, in its regard to the blessed God. It is the character of the natural man that he is "ungodly;" "there is no fear of God before his eyes;" he lives "without God in the world;" he is "alienated from the life of God;" "he says to the Almighty, *Depart from me!*" The very reverse of all this is the temper of the Christian, as it was also of his Master. We learn from the Gospels, and more abundantly from the Psalms, what a spirit of devotion continually animated the human nature of Christ! What reverential fear, what supreme affection, what lively zeal, what fervent prayer! A portion of the same spirit pervades the heart of every real Christian. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," and "the whole of man"—his great duty, his first interest, his chief delight. And this divine principle is implanted in every believer. "I will put my fear in their heart," is the grand covenant-promise; and it is fulfilled to every elect soul, when called by grace. The new-born soul turns naturally to God, as flowers to the sun or the needle to the pole; and though it may be disturbed or diverted for a time, the heavenly principle within abides and prevails, and the Christian is constrained to say, "Return to thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee."

The spirit of piety will render those acts of religion, which were intolerably burdensome to the unconverted man, natural and pleasant. Religion is no longer his medicine, but his food; not his task, but his delight. And the fear of God will certainly produce a reverence for his name; the Christian

cannot be a profane man; he cannot habitually "take in vain," in the light manner of the world, the great and fearful name of the Lord his God. And this principle will ensure his sacred regard to the holy Sabbath, the Bible, the house of God, the preached Gospel, the table of the Lord, and every means divinely appointed for his growth in grace.

3. SPIRITUALITY is another essential part of the Christian temper. This is a necessary effect of regeneration; for, "as that which is born of the flesh is flesh, so that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Every nature generates its own likeness.

We derive from our first parent the likeness of his apostate nature, earthly and *sensual*, not having the Spirit; but, if begotten again by the Holy Ghost, we derive from him a nature that is spiritual. Natural men, "*mind* earthly things;" they understand, pursue, and relish, only things of a worldly nature, while the things of the Spirit of God are foolishness to them; but the believer, being born from above, minds heavenly things, and sets his affections supremely on things above, and not on things below. This constitutes the grand difference between the children of this world and the children of God; and our future destination will be accordingly: for, "to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." While we are in the world a due regard must be paid to our worldly callings; for religion, so far from encouraging sloth and idleness, requires us to be "diligent in business;" but it requires us also to be "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." The things of this world, however great and important in some views, will be considered, in the light of eternity, as empty bubbles, insignificant trifles, and childish toys. The Christian weighs every thing in the balances of eternity. He considers what their value will be when he is on a dying bed; and judges how far they may be made conducive to his everlasting interest; for he "walks by faith, not by sight."

Besides, he is "crucified to the world, and the world to him," by the cross of Christ. Our gracious Lord never discovered any taste or relish for the pomps and vanities of this world. As Lord of all, he could have commanded every thing that was noble and great. But it is evident that he poured contempt on worldly grandeur. His whole life, death, and doctrine, tended to stain the pride of human glory; and to sanctify to his humble followers that lowly state he intended for them. Luxury of living, gaiety of dress, and conformity to the vain world, can plead no countenance from the example of Christ; but self-denial, plainness of living and manners, deadness to the world, and heavenly mindedness, are the very mind that was in Christ, and will be in us if we are his genuine followers.

4. CONTENTMENT is another feature of the Christian character. And this will result in a happy degree, from spirituality and heavenly-mindedness. A proper view, by faith, of eternal things, and a good hope, by grace, of an interest in them, will occasion a holy indifference about worldly matters, and render us contented with our present lot. Of old time, those persons "took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, who knew in themselves that they had in Heaven a better and more enduring substance." Heb. xi. 34. The way to be happy in this world is not to elevate our station to our mind, but to bring down our mind to our station. The first is, perhaps, impossible; for the ambitious mind of the prosperous man continues to rise with his lot; so that he is never satisfied. The last may, by divine grace, be accomplished. The Christian believes that God reigns, that his providence is universal, that a sparrow does not fall without his observation, and that the very hairs of his head are numbered; and if so, he has reason to conclude, that a special and most gracious Providence presides over all his affairs. The believer, therefore, having committed all his concerns to the Lord's care, in the

diligent and prudent use of means, will rest satisfied with the disposal of Heaven. He will say, "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good." We are led to expect trouble in this world; man, being born in sin, is born to trouble: and instead of wondering that things are so bad, we have reason to wonder that they are no worse. He who knows the evil of sin, and the plague of his own heart, will say, at the worst of times, "He hath not dealt with me according to my sins, nor rewarded me according to my iniquities." Besides, there is generally some cause for praise.

"There is mercy in every case;
And mercy (encouraging thought!)
Gives even affliction a grace,
And reconciles man to his lot."

Thrice happy was the apostle Paul, who could say, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; everywhere, and in all things I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need."—Should you think this a difficult lesson, and that, in certain cases you could not practice it, mark what follows; "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Phil. iv. 11, 12, 13. St. Paul, in himself, was as weak as another man; but he had learned to live upon Christ, and by faith to receive out of his fulness, grace for grace. Every believer may do the same. And let him remember, this patient temper is "the mind that was in Christ." Through a whole life of poverty and sufferings here, we read not of a single murmur; and when, in his agony, the bitterest cup that ever was mingled was put into his hands, he said, "The cup which my Father giveth me to drink, shall I not drink of it? Not my will, but thine be done."

5. MEEKNESS must also be mentioned as an amiable branch of the Christian temper. Jesus Christ was remarkably meek, and he pronounced a

blessing on his meek followers: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." We read of "the gentleness of Christ." How calmly did he endure the contradiction of sinners against himself! how meekly submit to the vilest indignities! Happiest they who most resemble him! It is a great victory for a man to subdue his own angry temper; and to preserve a sacred composure amidst all the ruffling storms and tempests of cross affairs, affronts, losses, and injuries. This meekness is not the effect of constitution, a temper naturally mild, nor the result of art and deceit, but a truly Christian grace, wrought by the Holy Spirit, arising from self-knowledge, self-possession, a sense of the goodness and love of God; it is seated in the heart, and will discover itself in the countenance and in the language. The meek Christian may be angry; but meekness will restrain his anger within proper bounds, as to the degree, duration, and effects of it; he will not be easily provoked, he will readily forgive, and will acquire that happy, useful art, the government of the tongue. A loud, clamorous, boisterous, boasting professor, little resembles the meek Jesus; but the meek Christian adorns the doctrine of God his Saviour, greatly recommends the Gospel of Christ, and enjoys a tranquillity of soul, which is heaven begun on earth:—a blessed foretaste of the undisturbed serenity of glorified saints.

6. MERCY, was a distinguishing grace in the character of Christ, and must be the prevailing disposition of his followers. Compassion to perishing sinners brought him down from heaven: compassion dictated all his words, and directed all his actions; and, blessed be God, we have still "a merciful and a faithful High Priest, who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on those who are out of the way." When the sick and afflicted were brought to Jesus, he had compassion on them, and healed them. When the multitude who followed him from far, to hear him preach, were hungry and faint, he had compas-

sion on them and fed them. He went about doing good. O let us be like him!

Hard as a rock is the heart of man by nature. Anger, envy, malice, revenge, and selfishness reign, and make men resemble the Devil. The greater part of men called Christians "*live to themselves*," and are satisfied if they do *no harm*, though they do *no good*; are secure, selfish, angry, peevish; confine their kindness to their relations; do little good but what they are pressed to; esteem all lost that is done for the relief of others; and think it wise to be cautious, and disbelieve the necessities of men: in a word, they make SELF the end of their lives; whatever their profession be, they very little represent or glorify God in the world. But on the contrary, a man whose nature is cured and rectified by grace, freed from pride, envy, and selfishness, and thence rendered benevolent and useful to his fellow-men, is the best representation we have of God upon earth, since the human nature of Christ was removed from it.

"Blessed are the merciful," said the benevolent Redeemer, "for they shall obtain mercy." We are not to purchase God's mercy by our mercy; but it is a good evidence of being ourselves "vessels of mercy," when we are inwardly disposed to be merciful. We are exhorted to "put on, *as the elect of God*, bowels of mercies." If we have felt the need of mercy, and tasted the sweetness of mercy, we shall find a divine pleasure in being merciful to the sons and daughters of affliction: we shall be forward to give and forgive, to pity and relieve them.

The *souls* of men claim our first regard. Millions of men are perishing for lack of knowledge. The merciful man will not only pray for them, but will gladly endeavour to send the glorious Gospel of Jesus to them; he will cast a pitying eye upon the poor ignorant children around him, and promote their religious instruction; he will gladly support the Christian ministry, knowing its important use in the

conversion of sinners. Nor will the *bodies* of men be neglected:—He will pity and visit the sick; he will feed the hungry; he will clothe the naked: and in order to do this, he will rather deny himself even lawful indulgencies, than be disabled from acts of generosity. The word of God abounds with exhortations to this disposition; and, if there be not a desire and endeavour thus to be useful, we may say with St. John, "How dwelleth the love of God in him?"

The narrow limits of this discourse prevent the mention of several other branches of this holy temper, as well as a proper enlargement on those already mentioned. We have room only to propose one more, which is the beauty and strength of them all; namely,

7. SINCERITY.—This is the very soul of all religion; for every Christian grace has its counterfeit. There are men who assume a profession of religion, on purpose the better to deceive others; and pretend to be devout towards God, that they may more effectually cheat and defraud their neighbours. From this vile hypocrisy, good Lord deliver us! If there be a place in Hell hotter than another, it will be the portion of the hypocrite; for how shall such "escape the damnation of hell!" Great is the importance of truth and uprightness. The Christian must needs be an honest man, exact and conscientious in all his affairs, conforming himself, in all his dealings, to that golden, that divine rule, *Whatsoever ye would that others should do to you, do ye even that to them.* The Christian will study "simplicity and godly sincerity," speaking the truth in love, and managing all the affairs of life as under the eye of God and with a regard to his glory. Happy the man of whom the Lord will testify, as of Nathaniel, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile!

APPLICATION.

We may learn from what has been said of the Christian temper, how excellent is the religion,

and how holy the gospel of Jesus Christ! how admirably calculated to promote godliness, and brotherly kindness, and charity! What a happy world would this be, if men who profess and call themselves Christians possessed the mind that was in Christ! We may learn also the necessity of something more than *morality*. Men may be honest and harmless; but this is not enough. We see many who are deemed moral characters, who are ungodly, unbeliever, neglecters of Christ, despisers of the Gospel. Let them not suppose that their regard to men will atone for their contempt of God. Let them know, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

How vain also is that profession of the truths of the Gospel, which leaves a man destitute of the Christian temper, a slave of his wretched passions, and under the dominion of covetousness, pride, anger, selfishness, and worldly-mindedness!—for some there are, not only negligent of holy tempers, but who despise that preaching which enforces them, calling it legal and low. But it is evident that our Lord insisted much upon inward purity, and pronounced his first blessings upon heavenly dispositions. The apostles abound in similar exhortations throughout their epistles; nor is he a Christian who does not hunger and thirst after the attainment of them,—all believers being "predestinated to be conformed to the image of God's dear Son."

On the survey of this brief sketch of the "mind that was in Christ," who has not cause to blush and sigh, and say, Holy Jesus, how far am I from possessing thy likeness? One of the ancients on a like occasion cried, "Blessed Lord, either these are not thy precepts, or we are not Christians!" But let me ask, Is this the temper you sincerely and earnestly desire? Do you mourn over your daily defects? Do you see an excellency and a beauty in holiness, and do you ardently long to resemble your Saviour? If so, be not dejected. This desire is from the Lord,

and is a token for good. Let no believer sit down in sullen despair, and say when he contemplates the character of Jesus, It is too high and great: I can never master my corruptions, and attain his dispositions! Why not? All things are possible to God: all things are possible to him that believeth. Does not all fulness dwell in Christ? and is it not treasured up for thy use? Go to him for it,—make free —it is thine for asking. "Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." Come boldly to the throne of grace to find grace; there is grace sufficient for thee. Open thy mouth wide, and it shall be filled. And though conscious, like the apostle Paul, that you have not already attained, neither are you already perfect,—yet like him, follow after, reach forth unto those things which are before; press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Look much at Christ; it will make you like him; you shall be "transformed into the same image, from glory to glory;" and ere long, you "shall see him as he is," and "be satisfied when you awake with his likeness."

SERMON L.

TITUS II. 11, 12.

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men; teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.

THE disease of our nature, our dislike of that which is good, and our love of that which is evil, has been observed and lamented by wise men in all ages. The fact could not be denied. The difficulty was, where to find a cure. Many attempts were tried, but all in vain, till Jesus Christ the great Physician appeared. The Gospel alone affords a certain and universal remedy for the fatal distemper of the soul; and this is the substance of our text.

St. Paul is here directing Titus, who was a minister of the Gospel, how to discharge his duty, so as to be useful to all sorts of people, because the Gospel was sent to all sorts of people. He was to teach and exhort both young and old, parents and children, masters and servants; it being the design of the Gospel to bring a present salvation from sin, as well as a future deliverance from Hell, and to teach all sorts of men to deny all doctrines and practices which are ungodly, and all worldly lusts of sensuality; and that we should live soberly with respect to ourselves, righteously and honestly with respect to our neighbours, and in a holy manner with respect to God. This will appear more plainly by

considering the several parts of the text distinctly, and in the following order:—

I. The Gospel of Christ is the grace or gift of God.
II. It bringeth salvation.
III. It hath appeared to all men.
IV. It teacheth us to live a holy life.

I. The Gospel is the grace of God. The word *Grace* signifies, in general, the free favour of God, either in his *good-will* towards us, or in his *good gifts* to us. Here it means one of his good gifts to us; namely, the Gospel; and the Gospel may well be called his grace; for it is the gift of his grace; it is the revelation of his grace, and it is the instrument of his grace.

The Gospel is called the *Grace of God*, because it is the *gift* of his grace; it is a matter of pure favour that we have the Gospel; it ought to be thought a very great blessing indeed, and to be esteemed above all earthly blessings. It is a mercy to have health, it is a mercy to have bread, but it is a much greater mercy to have the Gospel! "Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound?"

The Gospel is also called the *Grace of God*, because it is the *revelation* of his grace and good-will to poor sinners. We could never have known whether God would be gracious to sinners or not, without the Gospel; we could never have known that salvation is by grace; all mankind naturally seek it by their own works, and not by grace. But the very design of the Gospel is to declare the grace of God; to let us know the love of God to man, which he has proved in the gift of his Son, and in his readiness to pardon sin for the sake of his Son. Sinners had more reason to expect a revelation of his wrath than of his mercy: for all have sinned; and "the wages of sin is death." As soon as our first parents had sinned, and heard the voice of the Lord God in the garden, they were afraid, and ran to hide themselves, for they expected to hear nothing but the

sentence of death!—but they were mistaken, for God was pleased to give them a promise of his Son. In all ages he gave some hints of his intended mercy; but never so plainly as by the Gospel, or good news of salvation by Grace. We must take care to distinguish the Gospel from the Law. The Law of the Ten Commandments requires perfect love and perfect obedience; and it curses to Hell every man who breaks it but once. Ignorant people expect little from the Bible, but to teach them their duty, and how to be good, and so to get to Heaven by their obedience. To be sure, the Bible doth teach us our duty; and it would be well if people learned and did it better; but the first design of the Bible is to reveal Christ as a Saviour. The design of the law is not only to teach us our duty, but to convince us we have not done it; to show us our sin and our danger, and to oblige us to fly to Christ, that we may be saved by grace.

Again—the Gospel is called the *Grace of God*, because it is the *instrument* of his grace; it is what he sends by his ministers, and blesses by his Spirit, "to open men's eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." Nothing but the truth of God will do this. All the finest preaching in the world about virtue and morality will do no good as to the conversion or salvation of a sinner. It often makes men proud of themselves, keeps them ignorant of Christ, and makes them "go about to establish their own righteousness;" which is "to frustrate the grace of God.' and is as much as to say, that "Christ died in vain." But the Gospel is the sword of the Spirit, the rod of his strength, and the power of God to salvation, to every one that believeth. You see, therefore, with what good reason the Gospel is called the *Grace of God.*

We are now to show that,

II. The Gospel bringeth salvation.

The grand object of this gospel is salvation. It

supposes the guilt and danger of man as a sinner. It declares what Christ has done and suffered for our deliverance. It declares God's readiness to forgive all manner of sin and blasphemy, if we come to him by Jesus Christ. In short, it is to restore man from all the effects of his fall. Is he far gone from God? —it is to bring him back. Is he fallen?—it is to raise him up. Is he condemned on account of sin? —it is to justify him from all things. Is he an enemy of God?—it is to make a friend. Is he a slave of Satan?—it is to make a free man. Thus it bringeth salvation.

It brings it to the *ear*. The trumpet of the Gospel sounds with an inviting voice; it is a joyful sound. No music was ever so sweet as the sound of mercy to a convinced sinner: and faith cometh by hearing. It is the will of God that this sound should go out into all the earth, and that the Gospel should be preached to every creature. "He that hath ears to ear, let him hear."

It brings it to the *mind* or understanding. All God's children are taught of God; and every one that is taught of God cometh to Christ. Many people plead their ignorance, and think they shall be excused on account of it; but the Gospel is sent on purpose to enlighten the ignorant; and it will be our own fault, and our ruin, if we remain in the dark; it can only be because we love darkness rather than light. The Gospel is a glorious light, and when it is attended with the power of the Spirit, it chases away all the natural darkness of our minds, and makes us clearly see the wonderful plan of salvation by grace.

It brings it to the *heart*. It comes with power and life. It is not entertained with a cold and formal assent, as a matter of small concern, but cordially welcomed as the messenger of life. It is said of Lydia, in the Acts of the Apostles, that "the Lord opened her heart, so that she attended to the things which were spoken of Paul." He does the same for

all real Christians;—they receive the word with joy:—they approve of it heartily. It brings peace to their troubled consciences, and it brings love to God and man into their hearts.

It brings it to the *life*. It is designed to regulate the conduct, and make the believer holy in all manner of conversation and godliness. But this will appear more plainly hereafter.

III. The Gospel of salvation hath appeared to *all men*.

To *all nations* of men; it was not confined to the Jews, as they thought it would be. Jesus Christ ordered it to be preached to all nations, to all the world, to every creature. Accordingly, on the day of Pentecost, the Apostles preached it in a great variety of languages to people of various countries; and afterwards they, and many other preachers, went into all the countries then known.

To *all sorts* of men. This is the chief design of the word. In human society there must be various ranks and orders of men, and they must be distinguished by different names; but the Gospel knows no distinctions; it is equally sent to high and low, rich and poor, bond and free, male and female; for "Christ is all, and in all." Col. iii. 11. Let none, therefore, think they may be excused from regarding it. Many of the rich think the Gospel is well enough for the poor, but they are too wise to need it.—Many of the poor, on their part think religion rather belongs to the rich, but they are so ignorant, and have so much to mind for the body, that they think they may be excused. But you see this salvation is sent to all men;—and, "how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" But again, this Gospel is sent

To *sinners of every degree*: great sinners or little sinners, if it be proper to call any so. Jesus Christ came to call, not the righteous but sinners to repentance; and none but those who feel themselves to be sinners will regard his call. Such persons

heard him gladly on earth, while the proud Pharisees, who thought themselves good, despised him, and abused him, as the friend of publicans and sinners. Blessed be God that sinners, however great, are not excluded from the hope of the Gospel!—Christ commanded it to be first preached at Jerusalem, among his murderers; where, probably, many of them were converted; and to this very day, "the blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin."

Let it also be observed, that our text says, the Gospel *bringeth* salvation: not, it *shall* bring it hereafter; but it bringeth it *now*. It brings it near at this moment: "the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thine heart." Many people dreadfully mistake the matter, who look only for a salvation hereafter; they do not think of being saved till they die;—but salvation is a present business; and if we are not saved before we die, we shall never be saved at all. We must now be enlightened, convinced, believe in Christ, pass from death unto life, and thus be made new creatures, or we can never enter into the kingdom of Heaven. O that this Gospel may *now* bring into our hearts a present salvation! We proceed to the last and principal thing in our text.

IV. The Gospel which bringeth salvation, teacheth us to live a holy life; *it teacheth us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lust, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world;* that is, it teacheth us, What a holy life is,—the necessity of living such a life,—and *how* we may attain it.

I. The Gospel, which bringeth salvation, teacheth us what a holy life is; the true nature, and full extent of it. We have no other sufficient rule. The world affords nothing but imperfect examples; and our own deceitful hearts would often curtail the perfect rule. This is our teacher. Let us ever hear and read it with this view. Let it be as light to our feet, and a lamp to our paths.

This holy guide directs us, in the first place, to

deny ungodliness,—to renounce, abhor, and forsake all infidelity, idolatry, and impiety of every kind; every thing contrary to the four first commandments. If the devil, or wicked men, or our own wicked hearts, would tempt us to neglect the worship of God, or to take his name in vain, or to break the Sabbath, we must deny and refuse to do it. We must also *deny worldly lusts*, all irregular inclinations and desires forbidden by the last six commandments. These are *worldly* lusts; such as the men of the world gratify and place their happiness in. These will often ask for indulgence: they will plead very strongly that they are natural, that there is no harm in them, and that all the world indulges them; but they are "worldly lusts," and must be denied, unless we are willing to be damned with the world; for "the end of these things is death." These are the things that chain men to the world, and to a life of sense; make us like the brutes, cause us to forget God, to neglect the salvation of our souls; and "for these things' sake cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." This ungodliness and these worldly lusts, must, therefore, be denied; and this is that *self-denial* which our Lord insists upon, and without which we cannot be his disciples.

But this is not all. We are taught by the Gospel how to live. We are to live *soberly*, *righteously* and *godly*; these three words tell us our duty to *ourselves*, to our *neighbours*, and to our *God*.

To live *soberly* is, not only to abstain from drunkenness, which is a shameful sin, but from all excess in eating, drinking, and other bodily indulgences.—It is to be sober and moderate in our passions, our recreations, our speech, our dress, and whole behaviour: it is to be temperate and moderate in all lawful things, using the world as not abusing it: using it as pilgrims and strangers; not making it our rest or portion: but making all worldly comforts secondary things, subservient to the interests

of our souls and the glory of our God. This is to live soberly.

We are to live *righteously;* that is, in respect of our neighbour; to give every one his due; to honour all men; and do the duty of our stations, whether to our superiors, inferiors, or equals. The New Testament is full of excellent directions as to relative duties. The Apostles largely teach us the duties of husbands and wives, parents and children, masters, servants, and subjects. A true Christian will study his Bible with this view, and in every relation of life he will endeavour to conform himself to it; and he that pretends to religion without this, is a mere hypocrite. This is too little regarded by many professors of religion, as beneath their notice; they would even deter ministers from enforcing the relative duties, by calling it "legal stuff, working for life, and Arminianism;" but these people know not what they say, and how much they disgrace the Gospel of Christ, which our text declares is intended to teach us these things! It was a weighty saying of a good divine, that "To be really holy, is to be *relatively* holy." All sincere believers think so, and act accordingly.

But the Gospel also requires us to live *godly.* Many ignorant people think that if they live *soberly* and *righteously* it is enough. How many do we hear excusing themselves from all regard to Gospel-religion, by pleading that they are sober and honest! And will these people call themselves *Christians?* Moral heathens they may be. We deny they are Christians; for the Christian has a constant regard to God in Christ; he knows him, he believes in him, he fears him, he loves him, he prays to him, he converses with him, he lives to him. O the miserable blindness of many in this land of light! How many on a dying bed build all their hopes on their honesty, and having done no harm, though they have lived all their days in the neglect of the salvation of Christ, neglect of his Sabbath and

worship, buried alive in the cares of the world; sensual, worldly, covetous; perhaps opposers of the Gospel, and persecutors of the faithful!—The Lord in his infinite mercy open the eyes of such mistaken persons, and preserve them from going out of the world with a lie in their right hand!

To live *godly*, includes a great deal. We must know God by the teaching of his Spirit; we must believe on him as a God reconciled in Christ;—we must love him as our Heavenly Father:—we shall then love his law, and gladly be governed by his commandments. His word will be precious to us; his Sabbath delightful; his worship pleasant; his ordinances sweet: in a word, "we shall walk humbly with our God;" it will be our meat and drink to do his will; and being no longer our own, but bought with a price, we shall glorify God in our bodies and in our spirits, which are his.

This is that kind of life which the Gospel teaches us. This is its nature and extent. The Gospel also shows us the absolute *necessity* of it. Many deceive themselves with vain words, and think there is no occasion to be so strict; and they labour to render a life of holiness contemptible, by calling it ill-names; such as fanaticism and enthusiasm, and by ridiculing serious persons as Methodists, hypocrites, and righteous over-much. But we abide by the Bible. We abide by our text. The God of truth has prescribed this as the way of life; and has awfully declared, that, without repentance, without faith, without holiness and godliness, no man shall see the Lord. By this we are determined to abide, and let others look to themselves.

But should any say, All this is very right and good, but who can come up to it? By what means can we attain it? I answer, The Gospel that bringeth salvation, teacheth us how to attain it; and this is the peculiar excellency of the Gospel. The teachers of mere morality are like the task-masters of Pharaoh, who required the Israelites to make brick without

straw. They are always preaching that men should do this and that; but they tell them not their own inability, nor where their great strength lies. When we view a natural man wedded to the world, or tied and bound with the chains of his sin, or wallowing in the mire of sensual lusts, we are ready to say, Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? But nothing is too hard for the Lord. The Gospel first directs the sinner to repair by faith to Christ, and to obtain the pardon of his sins through his precious blood. This is his first business: and if the sinner be enabled to believe in Jesus, his faith will work by love, will purify his heart, and overcome his lusts. We are not by our own power, first to reform our lives, and then, as gracious and good people, to trust in Christ for salvation; but as soon as ever we discover our need of a Saviour, to fly to him without delay, just as we are: and he casts out none that comes to him! Believing in him will give a new turn to our affections:—we shall mourn for pardoned sin;—we shall hate the murderers of our Lord:—we shall be crucified to the world by the cross of Jesus; and the ways of godliness will no longer be a burden and a task, but our pleasant and easy service. The love of Christ will constrain us; and we shall judge that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that henceforth they who live should not live in themselves, but unto him who died for them.

Besides, whoever believes in Jesus is really united to him, in the same manner as the vine and its branches are united. All our fruitfulness in good works depends on this union. "Abide in me," said our Lord; "thus shall ye bring forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing." This is the true secret of godliness, the Gospel mystery of sanctification, and the only way of becoming holy. In this way nothing is too hard to be accomplished: and on this ground every believer may say with St. Paul, "I can do all things, through Christ which strength-

eneth me." We shall now conclude with some *Inferences* and *Exhortations*.

1. Is the Gospel the Grace of God? the Gift of his Grace? the Revelation of his Grace? and the Instrument of his Grace? Then take care to distinguish the Gospel from all false doctrine. Beware of "another gospel." Whatever does not bring to helpless sinners the good news of a free-grace salvation, is not the Gospel. Reject it.

And O take care that "you receive not the grace of God in vain." 2 Cor. vi. 1. The grace of God, as a divine principle in the heart, cannot be received in vain; but the Gospel, which is also called the Grace of God, is often received in vain. It is a great privilege to have the Gospel preached to us; but a dreadful thing to have it prove "the savour of death to death!" for Christ hath said, "He that believeth not, shall be damned!" Mark xvi. 16.

Is the Gospel the grace of God? Prize it yourselves, and recommend it to others. Next to Christ himself, it is the greatest gift of God to a ruined world. What an inexpressible privilege and honour is it to be in any way instrumental in communicating this heavenly gift to others! Let us invite our neighbours to hear it; let us put some gospel tracts into their hands; let us speak of it to our relations and friends; let us support and countenance the preaching of it at home and abroad; and especially let us recommend it to others by the holy effects it has produced on ourselves; let us recommend it by our lives.

It appears from what has been said, that there is no ground for the reproach often cast on the gospel of grace, that it leads to licentiousness; or that the doctrine of faith and grace is hurtful to morality and good works. It is a foul and groundless slander;—nothing is more false. Our text confutes it at once. We have shown that the Gospel is properly called the Grace of God; it is the Gospel that bringeth salvation by grace; and this free-grace gospel teacheth

us to live a holy life. What can be plainer?—And let it be noted, that nothing but the gospel of grace can truly teach or produce a holy life. This was at first the power of God to the salvation of bigoted Jews and beastly heathens. In every succeeding age it has had the same blessed effects; and it is the same to this day. While moral preachers labour in vain, and many of them address their heathen lectures to sleepy hearers and empty pews, we know and are sure that the plain truths of the Gospel are effectual to quicken dead sinners, to convert notorious rebels, and produce in numberless persons "the fruits of good living."

If any false professors of religion abuse the doctrine of grace for licentious practices, they have no countenance in so doing from the Gospel, or the preachers of it. Our text will at once confront and confound such base hypocrites. It teaches them the nature, necessity, and method of attaining a holy life. Believers were "chosen in Christ, that they might be holy and without blame before him in love." All the commands of God, both in the Old and New Testament require it: it was an eminent branch of the design of Christ in dying for his people. It is necessary to the present peace and happiness of our souls in this world of sin and vanity. This is the way in which God expects us to glorify him here; and in this consists our "meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light."

May our holy God, who has favoured us with his holy Gospel, render it effectual by his Holy Spirit, to make us "holy in all conversation and godliness!" and, at the great day, "present us holy and unblameable, and unreprovable in his sight!" To Him be glory, now and for ever! Amen.

SERMON LI.

ROMANS XII. 2.

*And be not conformed to this world.**

THIS is a general exhortation, adapted to a great variety of occasions. It affords an excellent rule for the Christian's conduct, which he may readily apply when tempted to follow the course of this world. It is easy to know what the world loves and pursues; and it is easy to remember that the Christian must take a different course. The way of the world is the broad way to destruction, the way of life is narrow, and trodden but by few.

The text is a plain and direct prohibition against conformity to the world. It is addressed to the people of God, and stands connected with an affectionate exhortation to be devoted to him. This chapter is wholly practical; and follows a large and excellent discourse upon the exceeding riches of divine grace to sinners, in their free and full justification through faith in Christ Jesus, and the most noble and glorious privileges to which they are called. "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Thus are the doctrines of grace sweetly connected with a gracious walk and conversation. They

* As this sermon is designed to expose the sin and danger of *Carnal Games and Amusements*, especially in the professors of religion, it may be usefully read in *Holiday-seasons, at the* time of a *Fair* or *Wakes*, or when *Theatrical Amusements* are introduced into a Town. It may also be lent to a friend who is in danger of being tempted to sinful compliances upon such occasions.

are connected in the Bible, and they are connected in all those who are taught of God.—May we happily know their sacred union by our own experience!

In order to this complete devotedness to God, the apostle here advises believers not to be "*conformed* to this world,"—not to be moulded into the same fashion,—not to comply with their temper and spirit,—not to imitate their depraved customs and manners; but, on the contrary, to "be transformed by the renewing of their minds;" to be changed into a contrary, better, more glorious, and abiding form,—in the daily renovation of their souls, yet more and more, by the Holy Spirit. The text, therefore, teaches us this great and useful doctrine:—That

CHRISTIANS must not be conformed to this world.

By "the world," we are certainly to understand the men of the world, in opposition to true believers, or the people of God. That there is a real and essential distinction between the world and the church, is abundantly plain from the Scriptures. Jesus Christ saith of his disciples, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world:" and St. John saith of believers, "We know we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." This important distinction prevails throughout the Bible. Everywhere, God's people are represented as differing from the world. Believers are called Children of God; others, the Children of the Devil, and the Children of Wrath: the one are friends, the others enemies; the one far from God, the other nigh unto him.

It was the design of Christ in dying for his people to deliver them from this present evil world,—to save them "from the evil that is in the world,"—to make an evident separation, and "to purify unto himself a *peculiar people*, zealous of good works:" that is, to separate them from the wicked world for his own use, and for his own glory, as his precious and peculiar property, that

they might be zealously affected towards him and his cause, in the performance of every good work.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ calls believers to this separation, and is the instrument of effecting it. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you." 2 Cor. vi. 17. There is much danger in the company of idolaters, and in connexion with unbelievers, there is danger of being infected and defiled: therefore a proper distance must be kept. And the Gospel of Christ becomes an occasion of this separation: it creates division; it causes disunion; the believer is crucified to the world, and the world unto him. Thus faith, which is the bond of union with Christ, is the instrument of separation from the world. And how reasonable is it to expect that persons whose state and character now differ essentially from others, and who will be eternally separated as far as Heaven is from Hell, should now bear the visible marks of distinction, and not be conformed to this world!

We may now proceed to enquire in what this non-conformity consists, or in what degree it is required: for a *total* separation is impossible, in the present state of things. There are family-connexions, which are not to be dissolved, because some of the parties are gracious, and others remain in their sins. 1 Cor. vii. 10. There are also civil connexions, in the lawful affairs of this world, with which religion cannot interfere. If we would wholly avoid intercourse with the wicked, "we must needs go out of the world," for the world is full of them. 1 Cor. v. 10. Neither does religion require or countenance a morose and sullen, or uncivil behaviour to the men of the world; much less does it demand an entire exclusion from the affairs of life, and a solitary confinement in a monastery or nunnery. Christians are not, like the old Pharisees, to say to others, "Stand off—we are holier than you." On the contrary, believers are

"the salt of the earth," and, by their necessary and lawful connexions with the world, are the happy means of preserving it from utter corruption: they are "the lights of the world," and diffuse some general rays of knowledge amidst the general darkness; and, by their wise, holy and prudent conduct among men, are to condemn the world, as to what is evil in it, and recommend the gospel they profess to the notice and approbation of others. But while, they are thus engaged, they are not to be conformed to the world, in the following respects:—

1. *As to the errors of the world,*—their false and dangerous sentiments in religion. The doctrines of the Gospel are directly contrary to the generally-received opinions of worldly men; they directly tend to humble the sinner, to exalt the Saviour, and to promote holiness; while the notions of the world tend to make the sinner proud, with some fancied opinion of his goodness, works and righteousness; to diminish the glory of Jesus Christ, as "the Lord our righteousness:" and to make holiness in heart and life a needless, if not a contemptible thing. It is the high privilege of God's people to be "taught of God;" to have the Spirit of truth, "whom the world cannot receive;" to "know the truth," to be "of the truth," to "keep the truth," and to be "sanctified by the truth." False teachers "are of the world, therefore they speak of the world, and the world heareth them;" but he that is of God, and knoweth God, heartily embraces the truth of the Gospel; he "heareth the voice of Christ, the true Shepherd; but the voice of the stranger he will not follow." 1 John iv. 5, 6. John x. 16, 25, 27. This separation from the religious errors of the world is of the greatest importance: and, while we pay all civil respect to all men, and abhor persecution, we must give no countenance to error. St. John gives us this direction: "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine (the doctrine of Christ,) receive him not into your house, neither bid him

God-speed; for he that biddeth him God-speed, is partaker of his evil deeds." 2 John 10, 11.

2. *We must not be conformed to the world in its sinful practices.* "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," are called "the World's Trinity,"—their God whom they worship and obey. The works of the flesh and the fruits of the Spirit are directly contrary to each other; they who are in the flesh practise the one; they that are in the Spirit practise the other. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest; as adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, wrath, strife, seditions, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: the doers of which shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Gal. v. 19—21. But, "if we walk in the Spirit, we shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh; and they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts." The Christian must therefore dissent from the world in its evil practices; even "the appearance of evil" must be carefully shunned. Pure religion and undefiled is to keep one's self unspotted from the world; to behave in such a circumspect and holy manner, as to keep clear of the pollutions of this evil and ensnaring world, that he may not bring a slur upon his conscience or his character.

3. *Christians must not be conformed to the spirit of the world.* There is a certain disposition and taste which forms the true character of a man of the world, and which operates as a powerful principle in the regulation of his whole conduct. There is also an opposite principle given to the people of God in their new birth, which gives a new taste to their minds, and a new bias to their affections. St. Paul, speaking of both these, saith, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God." 1 Cor. ii. 12. The spirit of the world must of course be a worldly spirit; or, in the language of Scripture, a "carnal mind;" it can be no other: for "that which is born of the flesh, is

flesh." So God himself declared of man before the flood:—"My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is *flesh:*" wholly fleshly and carnal;—"sensual, not having the Spirit." The desires, the pursuits, the delights of natural men are only worldly. Their cry is, "Who will show us any good?" "What shall we eat, what shall we drink, wherewithal shall we be clothed?" The world, in some form or other, is their beloved object. But the people of God, "redeemed from their vain conversation," have a nobler object in view. They are *spiritual* in their taste and pursuits; they can no longer grovel in the dust, or feed on husks; they are renewed in the spirit of their minds, and seek the things that are above. How poor, and mean, and low, are the sordid objects of the world in their esteem! Even the wisest and greatest among natural men are amusing themselves with the toys of children, the baubles of idiots, or the pranks of madmen, compared with the manly, solid, heavenly aims and employments of true believers.

4. *The Christian must not be conformed to the company of the world.* The men of the world are not his chosen companions. We have already observed, that converse with them cannot be wholly avoided: the lawful business of life will necessarily bring them together. But we speak of making them intimate friends, and the companions of leisure hours. But "how can two walk together, except they be agreed?" What fellowship hath light with darkness? What concord hath Christ with Belial, or Christians with the sons of Belial? Either must the Christian conform himself to the light, vain, frothy, and often profane conversation of worldly men, or they must conform themselves to his spiritual views; and which of these is most likely to happen, it is not hard to tell. We become insensibly like our intimate friends, and naturally drink into their spirit: as, therefore, there is in general but

little probability of doing good to carnal men by our company, it is far the wisest and safest for us to keep our distance. Intimate and habitual friendship with wicked men is considered in the Scripture as opposition to God. St. James, addressing himself to conforming professors, saith, "Ye adulterers and adultresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God." If our chief happiness be in the things of the world and if we court the friendship of wicked men in order to procure them, we are at heart enemies to God; and, in persons of a religious character, who profess to be betrothed unto Christ as their spiritual husband, this is heart-adultery.

And if this occasional conformity to worldly persons be so blameable, what must we think of forming connexions with them for life? How criminal and how dangerous to act directly contrary to the grand rule in this case! To marry—"only in the Lord." 1 Cor. vii. 39.

5. *Christians must not conform themselves to the world in their carnal amusements.* The taste of men discovers itself in nothing more plainly than in their choice of amusements. It is easy to know what these are, and what is adapted to the corrupt taste of the carnal mind. Worldly men are never so much in their element as when engaged in them; and, to enjoy them, they will often sacrifice their most important interests. Among these, the amusements of the theatre have the first place; for these the world strongly pleads, and affects to place them on a level with divine ordinances, by saying, They can learn as much from a good play as from a sermon. But it should be remembered, That sermons and means of grace derive all their virtue from the authority of Christ who appointed them, and has promised to bless them: but the advocates of plays can never pretend that Christ has either ordained them, or engaged to put his blessing upon them.

So far are plays from being useful to the cause

of virtue, that they are one of the most successful engines of vice that Satan ever invented. Several of the heathen philosophers and law-givers opposed them in the strongest terms. Plato banishes them from his commonwealth. Xenophon commends the Persians for not suffering their youth to hear any thing amorous; thinking it dangerous to add any weight to the bias of nature. Seneca complains, that by the stage, vice made an insensible approach, and stole on the people in the disguise of pleasure. Tacitus says, the German ladies preserved their honour, by having no play-houses amongst them. The Athenians would not suffer a judge to compose a comedy. The Lacedemonians would not endure the stage, under any kind of regulation. The Romans, in their better times, reckoned the stage so disgraceful, that any Roman turning actor, was degraded. And we may add, that the English laws, till very lately, denominated stage-players Rogues, Vagabonds, and Sturdy Beggars.

The earliest Christians abhorred them. Tertullian, in the second century, says, "We (Christians) have nothing to do with the phrenzies of the race-ground, the lewdness of the play-house, or the barbarities of the bear-garden." Some of the ancient councils ordained that players should be excommunicated; and that even the sons of clergymen must not be present at plays, "it being always unlawful for Christians to come amongst blasphemers." A good writer says, "Will you not avoid this seat of infection? The very air suffers by their impurities; and they breathe the plague. What though the performance be entertaining; what though innocence and virtue shine in some parts of it; it is not the custom to prepare poison unpalatably. No: to make the mischief spread, they must oblige the sense, and make the dose pleasant. Thus the devil throws in a cordial drop to make the draught go down, and steals some ingredients from the dispensatory of Heaven. Look upon all their fine sentences, their flights of fortitude, and their loftiness of

style— as honey dropping from the bowels of a toad, or the bag of a spider."—"And, admitting," says another, "that some good may be learnt at the play-house,—do people use to send their daughters to a bawdy-house to learn discipline? Do gentlemen educate their sons under highwaymen to teach them courage? Or will any man venture on board a leaky vessel, that he may learn the art of shifting in a storm!" Besides, if plays have such a moral tendency, how is it that the players are generally the most immoral people in the world, and the neighbourhood of play-houses the very sink of filthiness?

Archbishop Tillotson thought plays "a mighty reproach to Britain, and not fit to be tolerated in a civilized, much less in a Christian nation." He calls the play-house "the Devil's Chapel: the school and nursery of vice and lewdness." And one of the Judges well said,—"One play-house ruins more souls than fifty churches can save."

Dancing.—The dancing of both sexes, and especially in public places, is another species of amusement highly pleasing to the world, but extremely dangerous to good morals. The gaiety it inspires, the company into which it leads, and various evils connected with it, render it every way unbecoming the Christian; who has the utmost need to cultivate seriousness and gravity, and to live and act as a pilgrim and a stranger. There is scarcely any thing not absolutely and notoriously wicked in which conformity to the world consists, more than the amusement of the ball-room. Not a few have been called out of it into eternity; but where is the person who would wish, when summoned to the bar of God, to be found so employed!

Playing at cards is another favourite diversion with the world. The express purpose of this amusement is a sufficient argument against it; it is *to kill time.* Alas! our time is short enough, and will die of itself; we need not hasten its exit. Our days are as an hand-breadth, and our age is as nothing. We complain of the shortness of life, and yet labour to

reduce its narrow span. It may be justly doubted whether any game be lawful which depends upon casting a lot; but dealing the cards is of that nature, and is therefore a kind of appeal to God for the success of our play; for "the lot is cast into the lap, but the disposal thereof is of the Lord." But, not to insist upon this, it is really a childish business. It is a poor employment for rational and immortal beings to spend many hours of precious time in throwing about bits of spotted paper. The conversation that accompanies it is generally frivolous and foolish; the passions of avarice and anger frequently excited; and the tragical consequences of gaming are so perfectly opposite to the Christian character, that a good man ought to reject the amusement altogether.

There are other diversions, as horse-races, cock-fighting, bull-baiting, &c. as well as conformity to the world in gay, indecent or too expensive fashions of dress, upon which we have not room to comment particularly. There is one grand rule applicable to them all, and which may afford a pretty good test of their propriety or impropriety. You will find this apostolic direction in Col. iii. 17, "Whatsoever ye do, in *word or deed*, do all *in the name of the Lord Jesus*, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." Now, can you tell me how to see a play, to dance a minuet, or to play a game at cards, "in the name of the Lord Jesus, and to the glory of God?" Can you pray for the Lord's presence and blessing on these engagements?—A good man once convinced a company of the folly of these things, by offering to say grace before cards, or to pray for a blessing on them; the company felt the impropriety, and asked him what he was going to do? The good man replied,—"God forbid I should do any thing on which I cannot ask his blessing." Common sense forbids you to say, "Lord, go with me to the play-house, and bless the good instruction I go to receive!" or, "Lord, give me a good hand at cards!" Such petitions would be justly reckoned im-

pious: but the impropriety clearly shows that what cannot be done with prayer, cannot be done with a good conscience, cannot be done to the glory of God, and therefore ought not to be done at all. In all these things the consistent Christian must remember the text,—"Be not conformed to this world."

APPLICATION.

From what has been said, it is surely evident that it is the duty of Christians not to be conformed to this world. It is plain that God's people are a distinct people, and ought to be a separate people.—There is a holy singularity, though not an affected singularity, which well becomes them. This indeed requires courage. In certain situations, where persons have been closely connected with the carnal and the gay, and especially with the great, it will not be very easy to come out from among them, and avow that they belong to Christ. Yet, let none despair; the Scripture shows us how it may be done, 1 John, v. 4,—"Whosoever is *born of God*, overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our FAITH." By the new nature which the Christian receives, he gets above the terrors and allurements of the men and things of this world, so as not to be driven away by the one, or drawn aside by the other, from his duty to God. And this noble conquest is obtained, not by our own power, but by the strength we derive from Christ, through faith in him. Faith realizes eternal things, and shows us how vain and mean are the pursuits of the world. Faith also realizes the presence of God, and judges his approbation to be infinitely superior to the friendship of men.

Thus Moses, the man of God, triumphed over the world.—"When come to years, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." Heb. xi. 24. It was *by faith* that

Moses did this. Faith showed him the vanity and danger of a court life; of riches, and grandeur, and sensual pleasure. Faith also showed him "the recompense of reward"—the glories of the eternal world, which he should continue to enjoy when all human pomp is buried in the dust. He therefore wisely chose the better part, though attended with poverty and shame. With a crown of glory in view, he was willing to take up the cross, and even to glory in it. He determined to unite himself with God's people, and suffer reproach and affliction with them, rather than be conformed to this sinful and perishing world.

This subject shows the necessity of the new birth. If we would not be *conformed* to this world, it is necessary for us to be *transformed, by the renewing of our mind*, as the apostle adds, immediately after our text. Be ye *transformed*—changed into a better form—from being "earthly, sensual, and devilish," to become heavenly, spiritual, angelical; and this is done, "by the renewing of our minds." The Holy Spirit begins this renewing work in regeneration; it is gradually carried on in sanctification: in dying more and more to sin and the world, until the blessed work be perfected in everlasting glory. Thus shall we "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." The will of God, as revealed in his word, for our direction in this particular, and in every other branch of duty, is *good*: good in itself, and good for us: conformity to it is *acceptable* and well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; and it is *perfect*;—it is sufficient to make a finished Christian "thoroughly furnished to every good work." O that Divine Grace may so transform our hearts, that we may prove, and prove by our own *experience* (for nothing else can teach it) how happy a thing it is to be wholly devoted to God, and to be governed in every respect by his sacred will!

SERMON LII.

MATTHEW XXIV. 44.

Therefore, be ye also ready.

DEATH is a most serious thing! It is impossible to express in words what a most serious thing DEATH is! Those who have thought and said the most about it in the time of their health, have found dying to be a far more serious matter than they could before conceive. "The living know that they must die;" and yet how few lay it to heart!—how few there are who "so number their days as to apply their hearts to wisdom!" In small country villages, where death seldom comes, the people scarcely think of it; and "their inward thought seems to be, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations!" and in large cities, where the bell tolls every day, and people constantly see coffins and funerals, the commonness of death takes away the solemnity of it. And in some places it is shocking to reflect how little seriousness attends a funeral; and that, by excessive eating, drinking, and unseasonable mirth, the house of mourning is turned into the house of feasting! All this shows that the heart of man is filled with criminal vanity, and how far it is from that constant seriousness which becomes mortals living on the borders of eternity.

* This sermon may be particularly seasonable when the providence of God hath removed a relation, a friend, or a neighbour.

Yet, when death comes into our houses, or our neighbourhood, we should be particularly thoughtful. When it pleases God to remove a relation, a friend, or a neighbour, we should consider him as speaking to us,—speaking the solemn language of the text, "Be ye also ready." It is as if he had said, "Thoughtless mortals, remember your latter end. Consider this providence. Your fellow-creature is dead:—he speaks no more—he moves no more—he breathes no more: he has done with all the businesses, all the pleasures, all the relations of life: he is stripped of his former raiment, and wrapped in a shroud: he walks no more at large, but is confined to the narrow limits of the coffin: he mixes in human society no more; he is now the companion of worms: he has forsaken all his former possessions, and retains nothing but a little spot of earth, with which he will shortly mingle, so as not to be distinguished from it. This is the end of man! This will shortly be your end. Prepare for it: prepare to die; prepare to meet your God!" Such is the language of Providence. He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear it.

The words of our text were spoken by Jesus Christ to his disciples, with respect to the destruction of Jerusalem, and also with respect to the end of the world. The destruction of Jerusalem was a "coming of the Son of Man," to execute terrible judgments on the unbelieving Jews. The Son of Man will also come to judge the world at the last day. But the particular time of the first event was kept secret; "the day and the hour was known to no man." The same may be said of the day of judgment. Our Saviour uses this as an argument with his disciples to be *always ready*. "Watch, therefore," said he, "for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." And this he enforces by two comparisons, taken from the common prudence of men. If any housekeeper was told, that some time or another in the night his house would be attacked by

thieves, he would be sure to watch at every hour till the danger was over. And if a servant is ordered to sit up for his master, but knows not whether he will come home at twelve o'clock, at two, or at three, he ought to be watching, that whenever he comes, he may be ready to open the door: —so, *Be ye also ready, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.*

The hour of death is the hour of the Lord's coming to us. He comes to put a period to that life, which his power had constantly supported:— He comes to separate the immortal spirit from the mortal body:—He comes to call the soul to his tribunal, and fix its state in endless bliss or woe. And although his coming will not be visible, attended with angels in the clouds of Heaven, as his last grand coming shall be, yet it is equally important and solemn in its consequences to each individual. Jesus has "the keys of death; he has a right to close our lives when he pleases;" and he has "the keys of the unseen world," to open the doors of Heaven to his people, and to open the doors of Hell to the wicked.

But the time of his coming is a profound secret: "of that day and of that hour, knoweth no man." There is indeed "an appointed time to man upon the earth: his days are determined;" "the number of his months are with God;" who has fixed "bounds which he cannot pass." But *where* the bounds are fixed, or how many the years, and months, and days, who can tell? It is not fit for us to know. If wicked men certainly knew they should yet live many years, their hearts would be fully set in them to do evil: they would be more presumptuously wicked than they are. And if weakly and timorous people knew the time of their death, they would thereby be made unfit for any of the enjoyments or duties of life. It is therefore best as it is. Thus we are kept dependent on the God of our lives; and, if truly wise, we are always kept watchful;

always desiring and endeavouring, according to our Saviour's advice in the text, *to be ready*; which is the subject of the present discourse. We therefore observe, that

To be always ready for death should be the first, the grand business of our lives.

No man remaining in his natural state of sin is, or can be, ready for death. "The wages of sin is death;" and he who "dies in his sins," must receive the wages of them. "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness;" "chased out of the world;" forced away in anger, and against his will, like a malefactor to the dungeon, or a criminal to the gibbet. The natural man cleaves to the dust: his head and heart are full of worldly schemes and projects of happiness; but death unexpectedly arrives and stops him short. "In that very day his thoughts perish;" and, "while he saith Peace and Safety, sudden destruction cometh upon him, as travail upon a woman with child, and he cannot escape." He is perhaps saying to himself, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry:" but God saith unto him, "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee!"

It is unspeakably awful for a person to die in his sins, his guilt unpardoned, his heart unrenewed, under the power of that carnal mind which is enmity against God: "Guilt," says one, "is a bad companion in life; but how terrible will it be in death! It lies now, perhaps, like cold brimstone, on their benumbed consciences; but when death opens the way for the sparks of divine vengeance to fall upon it, it will make dreadful flames in the conscience, in which the soul will be wrapt up for ever."

Vain are the hopes of ungodly men with respect to death. They do not like to think of dying; but when they do, they flatter themselves in their iniquity, and hope they shall do very well at last; they think they have good hearts, or that their good deeds will make amends for their bad ones: or that they shall have

time to repent and make their peace with God, receive the sacrament, and get the priest's passport to Heaven. O vain delusive hopes! Such men generally die as they live; and "what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?" These foolish hopes, not being founded on the word of God, are like a house built upon the sand; and when the rain shall descend, the floods come, and the winds blow, and beat upon the house, down it must fall; and great will be the fall of it!

Only "the pure in heart shall see God." How can the profane man, who blasphemes his Maker every day, and with almost every breath calls for damnation, expect to meet God with safety? How can the unclean, the whoremonger, the adulterer, or the lascivious expect to be admitted into the presence of a pure and holy God? How can the Sabbath-breaker imagine he shall be permitted to keep perpetual Sabbath in Heaven, who could not endure the work of a short Sabbath once a week on earth? Shall the wilfully ignorant dream of a share in the inheritance of the saints in light?—the dishonest man think to rank with the righteous?—the self-righteous person with those who have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb? Alas! all such hopes will be disappointed—"their hopes shall be cut off, and their trust shall be as the spider's web."

What then is it to be ready for death? In what does a real preparation for it consist?

1. The foundation of the whole is, *an interest in Christ;* "Blessed are the dead who die *in the Lord.*" Sin and death came by Adam; righteousness and life come by Christ. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death hath passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned."—"Through the offence of one many are dead; yea, by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation." Now, as our being *in Adam* is the cause of death, being *in Christ* is the cause of

life. Our union with the first man has subjected us to sin, misery, death, and Hell;—union with the second can alone afford us righteousness, happiness, life, and glory. "I am," said Jesus, "the life. I am come that they may have life; and he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die."

There is no security against the fatal consequences of death, but by believing in Jesus. The soul that is truly convinced of sin, that sees its danger, that is sensible of its helplessness, that is enlightened in the knowledge of Christ, will fly for refuge to him, will trust alone to his perfect righteousness; and in doing so is secure. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." This, therefore, was the summit of St. Paul's wish;—"that I may be found *in him;*" that is, as he explains it, not having on his own righteousness, but the righteousness of Christ, by faith. Phil. iii. 8. He saw that his own righteousness was insufficient. In the days of his ignorance he trusted to it: but being taught of God he discarded it; he despised it as to the thought of appearing in it, or being justified by it. He now longs to be found in Christ; that is, in his righteousness;—to be found in it, as a safe refuge, in which the avenger of blood cannot reach him,—to be found in it, as the wedding garment, in which the master of the feast would accept him. There is no living happily, nor dying safely, but as we are in Christ; and some who have vainly trusted in their own works in the secure hour of prosperity, have wisely thought better of it when they came to die; and confessed, "it was safer to trust to the righteousness of Christ."

If we are united to Christ, and are interested in his righteousness, death cannot hurt us; it is like a serpent that has lost its sting. So the apostle beautifully speaks, 1 Cor. xv. 56. The sting of death is *sin*, and the strength of sin is the *law;* but

thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Death is compared to a venomous serpent, that pierces and poisons. Sin is the sting of this deadly serpent. It is sin that makes death so terrible to nature: were it not for sin, death would be of little consequence, considering what a vain and vexatious world this is. And the strength of sin is the *law*, —that which gives such a formidable power to sin, whereby it subjects us to the death of the body, and to everlasting misery, is the holy and righteous law of God, armed with its fearful curse, and binding the sinner under the guilt of his sin, to the destruction of both body and soul. But, thanks be to God, Jesus Christ has taken away the sins of the people by the sacrifice of himself; redeemed us from the curse of the law, by becoming a curse for us; and thus he hath deprived death of its sting. "Death shot its sting into our Saviour's side; there left it; there lost it."

This is the true and only foundation of our preparation for death. It is sin that makes death terrible; but Christ has taken away sin, and so taken away the sting of death. If, therefore, we believe in him, death cannot hurt us; for "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," the Gospel having freed them from the law of sin and death. "He that hath the Son hath life;" "he shall never perish, but shall have everlasting life."

How much to be pitied are those poor ignorant creatures, who, in the prospect of death, comfort themselves with the thoughts of having done no harm! having paid every one his own; having been good livers; having kept church and sacrament; and having been good to the poor, and so on! All these are refuges of lies, and will leave the sinner exposed to the curse of the law, and to the sting of death. As no man can keep the law, no man can be saved by the law. Only Christ our Surety could

keep the law perfectly; he did so; and by so doing, has "brought in an everlasting righteousness, which is to and upon all who believe." Blessed then are they, and they only, who die in the Lord! *To be in Christ*, then, is the ground-work of our readiness for death; to have *Christ in us*, by his Spirit, sanctifying our nature, it is equally necessary; and these blessings are always connected. He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit; "for if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

2. We cannot be prepared for death, unless we are prepared for Heaven: and no man is prepared for Heaven but by the Holy Ghost. Our Lord has most solemnly declared, that "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of Heaven." Natural men think little of Heaven: they have little other notion of it than that it is not Hell. But if they had any just conception of that holy and happy state, their reason would convince them, that without an inward change they could never attain or enjoy it. Heaven would be a burden to a graceless soul. As well might a swine that wallows in filthy mire be delighted with the splendors of a palace; or a stupid ass be enchanted with the harmony of a concert, as a sensual, carnal man be satisfied with the joys of the heavenly world! There must be a new heart, a new nature, and new affections, or there can be no relish for a better world. The more any thing or person on earth is like Heaven, the more the sinner hates it; and the more resemblance it bears to Hell, the more he loves it. His carnality of soul, his love of sensual pleasures, with all the wicked passions of his mind, are daily fitting him for another place, and another sort of company. He is treasuring up food for the worm that never dies, and fuel for the fire that shall never be quenched.

But by regenerating grace the believer is formed for glory. God has given a new bias to his affections. He sees the evil of sin, and sincerely hates it. He sees the beauty of holiness, and ardently

desires it. He sees the excellency of the dear Redeemer, and cordially loves him. He delights in the law of the Lord after the inward man. He loves the truth, the day, the ordinances, the people of God. He sees the vanity of the world, and is in some degree weaned from it. He has a glimpse of the glory that shall be revealed, and longs to behold it; and in this experience he enjoys a foretaste of Heaven. He is not altogether a stranger to the joys of that celestial place. "He who has wrought us for the self-same thing is God;" and this experience is a blessed earnest of the future possession. The believer's title to Heaven is in the righteousness of Christ alone; but his fitness for it is by these gracious operations of the Holy Spirit; and he who enjoys them in the greatest degree, is the person best prepared for the great change.

In these blessed dispositions consist the believer's *habitual* readiness for death; but it is usual also to speak of his *actual* readiness. Our Lord has illustrated the difference between habitual and actual preparation, by the similes employed in the context. "A housekeeper is habitually ready for the thief, when he has taken all proper measures to secure his habitation by doors, and bars and bolts; but he is actually ready, when he stands armed to oppose his entrance. So the faithful servant is habitually ready to serve his master at any hour of the day, in any work to which he may be called; he is actually ready for his Lord's return, when he keeps waking with the light in his hand."

The believer is actually ready for death, when the graces of the Spirit in his soul are in their lively exercise. When faith is strong, triumphing over doubt and uncertainty,—when hope is firm, subduing painful fears,—when love to God, and Christ, and heavenly things, is ardent,—when he is actually employed in performing the proper duties of his station, or when calmly submitting to the afflicting hand of God,—when he is guarding against excessive cares

or undue indulgence of the flesh, and especially when the thoughts of death become familiar and pleasant, and the views of glory bright and enchanting:—then, with the world under his feet, Heaven in his eye, and Christ in his arms, he may say with pious Simeon, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

APPLICATION.

How important is readiness for death! Remember, death will come at its appointed time, whether you are ready or not: and O, how often at an unexpected hour! Not seldom, death comes suddenly. How often do we hear of sudden deaths! How many go to bed well, and never rise more, or go out from home well, and never return! Some are snatched away in the midst of their amusements, and others while engaged in their callings. How necessary then to be *always* ready, to be ready now! Delay in this case is dangerous indeed. Almost all men talk of preparing at some future time; when sickness shakes them over the grave, or when the Lord removes a relation or a neighbour, by some alarming stroke, they promise themselves they will repent and reform; but the impression soon dies away; the world, like the returning tide, fills their hearts with its cares and pleasures, and the writing on the sand is all erased.—"So dies in human hearts the thought of death."

But O, consider the unspeakably dreadful consequence of dying unprepared. We can die but once; and if we die in our sins we are lost, lost for ever! Once lost, lost for ever! There is no repentance in the grave, no pardon in the grave, no regeneration in the grave. *Now* then is the time; it may be the *only* time; certainly the best time. It may be Now or Never.

How happy is the life of that man who has "a good hope through grace!" the full assurance of

hope; a solid, scriptural persuasion of his interest in Christ! He truly enjoys life; and he may smile at death. He may say with St. Paul, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."—While I live here, Christ is with me;—when I die, I shall be with Christ. How contented and cheerful may he be in the humblest lot, who knows that he is an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ! O happy, happy, happy man! Do not you wish to be like him?

But what is your present course? If you are living in sin, gratifying the lust of the flesh, and departing from the living God, you cannot have this assurance. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; and he walks not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. If you are living in sin, you cannot be happy:—you know you are not. You try to be happy by forgetting death; but you cannot forget it. The tolling of the bell, the sight of a funeral, or the news of another's decease, will force the recollection of it, and it makes you miserable. You are like the man at a banquet, with a drawn sword hung over his head by a hair:—you cannot enjoy life for fear of death. O that you were wise! for religion is true wisdom. Forsake the foolish and live. Let the wicked forsake his way, and turn unto the Lord: let him cry to God for the help of his Holy Spirit, without which no efforts of nature to get rid of sin will prove effectual; but with which the strongest corruptions may be subdued, and the sinner prepared for death and Heaven.

Let Christians remember their Lord's advice:—"Be ye also ready; for ye know not the hour when your Lord cometh." Remember, even the "wise virgins slumbered and slept." Guard against this slothful temper. Cannot ye watch one hour? Be sober; be vigilant: the Judge is at the door. Be diligent, believe in Jesus, and like your Master, "work while it is called to-day; the night cometh, in which no man can work." Many have, on a dying bed, repented of their negligence,—none of their

diligence. Now is the time for activity; there will be rest enough in the grave. And O, daily guard against every obstruction to actual readiness. Conform not to the world in its levities and vanities. Be much alone—be much with God Make conscience of redeeming precious time, and employing all your talents for the glory of God, the welfare of your family, the church, and the world. In a word, die daily.

When God removes any one that is dear to us, what cordial consolation does it afford, if we have reason to believe he was ready for death! We must not sorrow as men without hope. The change is his great advantage. It would be selfish to wish him out of Heaven, to reside again in this vale of tears. "We should scarcely dare to weep," said one, "if Christ had evidently taken the body along with the soul of our friend to Heaven;" and why weep now? Absent from the body, he is present with the Lord; and though the body must see corruption, it shall not always be the prisoner of the grave. Jesus has engaged to raise it up at the last day, and to fashion it like his own glorious body. O let us prepare to follow our pious friends, favoured with an earlier call to glory; while we remain below, let us be active for God; and soon shall we join our kindred spirits before the throne, unite in the song of the redeemed, and "so be for ever with the Lord."

END OF VOL. IV.

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